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Reconstructing baseball's image: Landis, Cobb, and the baseball hero ethos, 1917 – 1947

Lindsay John Bell
Iowa State University

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Reconstructing baseball's image: Landis, Cobb, and the baseball hero ethos, 1917 – 1947

by

Lindsay John Bell

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rural Agricultural Technology and Environmental History

Program of Study Committee:

Lawrence T. McDonnell, Major Professor

James T. Andrews

Bonar Hernández

Kathleen Hilliard

Amy Rutenberg

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2020

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ABSTRACT

Between 1917 and 1947, professional baseball in the United States became politicized under the rule of commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis. He reconstructed the game's sport-hero ethos to promote civic-minded manhood, forging a powerful bond between the construction of American masculinity and the demands of civic obligations. Landis understood that baseball's popularity had created idols out of the men who played the game, imbuing the sport's hero ethos with the power to influence the discourse that defined manhood. He believed that baseball could serve the needs of the nation by inculcating a belief that patriotic actions were at the core of American masculinity.

Landis oversaw the expansion of "sportsmanship" as a moral standard in athletics that taught values that were important to building virtuous citizenship. The changes he implemented proved transformative, both on and off the playing field. His work reconstructed sports as an American experience that was vital to sustaining a functioning democracy. While the current scholarship acknowledges baseball's importance to defining the American experience and as a solution to the "crisis of masculinity," the two historiographies rarely overlap. This study seeks to explore how Landis used baseball to influence a relationship of reciprocity between sports and the state that helped to grow American nationalism.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On January 12, 1921, the sixteen owners of professional baseball teams, along with the presidents of the American and National Leagues, met at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.¹ They brought with them a contract that already contained eighteen signatures, and they needed just one more. Without it, they faced ruin. Sitting at a desk in room C-2, while the representatives of Organized Baseball watched, Federal Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis applied his mark to the agreement that officially made him the sole arbiter of and most powerful man in baseball.² “In an earnest effort to insure to the American public high-class and wholesome professional baseball,” the contract read, “the Clubs...have agreed to submit themselves to the jurisdiction of a Commissioner with broad powers of decision...relating to the conduct of the National Game.” In the fall of 1920, revelations of a scandal had threatened to undermine Organized Baseball’s efforts to portray the sport as the wholesome and “principled recreation of the American people.” The club owners pursued Landis because they believed that he possessed the “necessary qualifications” and “dignity” required of a commissioner.³

The owners of Organized Baseball hired Landis to save baseball from itself. Club owners feared losing profits if fans lost faith in the game’s integrity. That spurred them to place the fate of baseball’s future in the hands of the famed federal judge. Although team revenue was important to Organized Baseball’s future, it was not the main issue that Landis believed plagued

¹ By the 1920s, some owners of professional baseball teams hired men to handle the daily operations of the club – including attending meetings. These men were given the title of “team president.” Some of the owners represented themselves as team presidents. Since team presidents acted in the interest of the owners, unless otherwise noted, the remainder of this study will use the term “owners” to refer to presidents and owners when both parties are present.

² The term “Organized Baseball” throughout this study refers to the all-white, professional baseball league that is known today as “Major League Baseball.”

³ Meeting of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs, January 12, 1921, “National League, American League Collection,” Box 1, Folder 2, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

the sport. He saw a greater peril facing the nation that went beyond the 1919 World Series scandal. Eight players on the Chicago White Sox had knowledge of a plan in which gamblers had paid seven players between \$5,000 and \$50,000 to throw the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. The plan nearly went undetected until a grand jury investigation in 1920 had revealed the plot that exposed a seedy underside that threatened Organized Baseball's wholesome reputation.⁴ The Black Sox scandal occurred in the years immediately following the First World War and exacerbated concerns already associated with threats to American identity. Leading government officials depicted and social commentators the Bolshevik Red Scare, a new crisis of masculinity, and nativist anxieties as internal assaults on democratic institutions. The danger was real, they believed: if sinister ideologues could infiltrate government and other American organizations, they could destroy the fabric of America. Baseball's scandal was symptomatic of a social, political, and moral disease that imperiled the nation itself.

Promoters of baseball depicted the sport as uniquely American inculcating values and beliefs that were vital to protect American identity. The Black Sox scandal represented the decay of baseball as an important institution that had the power to "Americanize" anyone who played the game. If the country lost baseball, then it faced a greater challenge in the struggle to safeguard American character. Landis' job required more than addressing the Black Sox scandal and baseball's gambling problem if Americans wanted baseball to actually serve as a process that taught morality and civic virtue. At a time when the United States faced questions about the very meaning of the term "American," baseball needed to survive – and thrive – as a cultural institution that inculcated patriotism and nationalism.

⁴ Charles Fountain, *The Betrayal: The 1919 World Series and the Birth of Modern Baseball*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4-5.

Once he became commissioner, Landis also had to repair Organized Baseball's apparent lack of patriotism. Players and owners alike had mishandled their response to mobilization during the First World War. Landis wanted to ensure that the nation's youth understood that part of their identity as men relied on their commitment to uphold and defend American principles. He wanted everyone associated with the sport to appear patriotic, which he promoted by affiliating Organized Baseball with programs that honored military veterans. He used his power as baseball commissioner to instill in the nation's youth the traits he believed were intrinsic to the men who accepted the burdens of war as their civic duty. He believed that soldiering validated a man's virtue, and that soldiers deserved admiration. But he also knew that ballplayers had become national icons who retained a powerful grip on the minds and hearts of America's youth. To help the sport model civic virtues, Landis had to imbue baseball's hero ethos with the ideals he associated with veterans of war. Yet it has been almost entirely ignored by scholars and taken for granted by the wider public. The infatuation with the Black Sox scandal has heretofore minimized Landis and his legacy. It was, perhaps, the most drastic rehabilitation of sports, leisure, manhood, and citizenship in American history.

Landis was not an authoritarian czar. He did not try to maintain a strict standard in which each ballplayer had to possess every characteristic that he believed modeled admirable behavior. Rather, he governed baseball in a way that favored men whose actions aligned with characteristics of civic virtue – honesty, integrity, patriotism, and more – that he wanted to inculcate in America's youth. The sum of these characteristics created for him an image of the type of man who played professional baseball. That empowered the sport to teach children civic virtues vital to upholding American character. Landis' work strengthened the relationship between the cult of war and sports by constructing a claim that every ballplayer derived his

manhood from civic obligations to the state. This allowed Americans to celebrate their achievements and for children to idolize them. It was an outlandish argument, but capable of stoking the valiant ideals associated with American manhood.⁵

Landis used baseball to construct a specific type of American masculinity that required the physical skills associated with soldiering along with an attitude that was obedient to a chain of command. Baseball taught both, and aided Landis' quest to construct an ethos of manhood that valued civic obligations. "What is there more important to the country," Landis asked, "than giving proper direction to the conduct of the ideals of boyhood – the youths who will be the men of tomorrow?"⁶ He used his power to align baseball's hero ethos with the principles of civic-minded manhood, vastly expanding and strengthening baseball's role in American life. Never had sports and politics been so closely intertwined. Landis transformed baseball into a truly American game that reflected the aspirational ideals and bipartisan interests of the state. An ongoing interest among military leaders was implementing a training program that prepared boys to be effective soldiers should the nation call on them in time of war. Sports offered a less authoritarian solution than the Universal Military Training less democratic nations employed.⁷

What Landis thought and said mattered far beyond baseball. His new position gave him a powerful voice in the national discourse on American masculinity in the early twentieth century. He used it clearly and forcefully. His private correspondence reinforced his public statements, showing that he truly believed his message. Although his claims sometimes rested on anecdotal

⁵ Robin F. Bachin, "At the Nexus of Labor and Leisure: Baseball, Nativism, and the 1919 Black Sox Scandal," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 36, No. 4 (Summer, 2003), 956.

⁶ Edgar G. Brands, "The Life Story of Kenesaw Mountain Landis," *The Sporting News Baseball Guide and Record Book*, (St. Louis: Sporting News Publishing Company, 1945), 113.

⁷ Matthew Lindaman, *Fit for America: Major John L. Griffith and the Quest for Athletics and Fitness*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 36.

evidence or appeals to personal experience, he expressed his beliefs as an admired, relatable and powerful person. That turned his ideas into reality for many Americans. He did not pay lip service to ideals he alone thought were vital to the construction of civic-minded manhood. Landis received numerous letters from both public and private citizens who regurgitated the same ideas and beliefs that he advanced. This suggests that people found truth in the words of a powerful figure like Landis, which served to bolster his claims about American manhood. So, too, this suggests that Landis was a keen observer of those around him, reflecting ideas he thought especially important. When people consumed baseball in the 1920s and far beyond, thanks to Landis they also absorbed the values of patriotism and sacrifice that he saw as important to civic-minded manhood.

This study is only incidentally about baseball. It builds from the premise that gender – whether manhood or womanhood – is a “historical, ideological process.” Those who retain positions of power contribute to the construction of gender, which influences prevailing attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and femininity.⁸ Through public discourse, policies, and performances, Americans reinforced characteristics assigned to the preexisting social category of “men.” Landis’ role as the most powerful man in American sports allowed him to become a chief architect of a new masculine ideal. Like other leading reformers of the post-Progressive Era, Landis used the institution of baseball as a way to create a better society through civic-minded manhood. Like so many others in this strange new age of “Normalcy,” he also upheld ideas about race that assumed that white men were superior.⁹

⁸ This study builds from the theoretical framework about gender from George Chauncey’s *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Chauncey establishes that we understand gender in three ways: gender is performed; gender is felt, and gender is imposed.

⁹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1927*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.

This study aligns with scholars who believe that manhood reinforces beliefs about race. The early twentieth century “crisis of masculinity” required leading reformers to redefine manhood to reinforce male power. To maintain a racial hierarchy that assumed white men as superior, black men were not believed to be capable of developing a civilized manliness. Their masculine traits remained primitive and too “untamed” to be included in the prevailing construction of American masculinity. Baseball earned its title as the “National Pastime” partly because it was the only major professional sport in early twentieth century America that was fully segregated.¹⁰ For that reason, this study does not maintain an intense focus on race in relation to the construction of civic-minded manhood. The owners of professional baseball developed a “gentlemen’s agreement” that barred black men from playing the sport. They assumed that African American men were not capable of performing at the same level as their white counterparts. That denied them access to a role in the construction of an honorable and virtuous manhood. Baseball was fully segregated for thirty-four years before the owners appointed Landis commissioner, and remained segregated throughout his twenty-four years in that role. Although Landis remained indifferent to segregation, he promoted civic-minded manhood at a time when black men had already been banned from playing Organized Baseball. The tragedy is that, across this period, and as a result of his efforts, the whiteness of American manhood came to seem obvious and indisputable. This study does not seek to rescue white America – or baseball – from this egregious failure

This study provides an important argument for the broader historiography of sport history and American cultural history. After the First World War, and for the first time in American history, Landis empowered baseball to inform ideas about American character. In 1998, David

¹⁰ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 2.

Pietrusza published the most comprehensive biography of Kenesaw Mountain Landis: *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis*. Pietrusza's work on Landis is extensive, yet it is a standard biography that does little to highlight his role in constructing civic-minded manhood. A former editor of *The Sporting News*, J.G. Taylor Spink, published the only other work that focuses exclusively on Landis. Spink released *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*, in 1947 shortly after Landis' death. It is a compilation of interviews conducted with the former commissioner; however his significance remains confined to baseball despite numerous scholarship that describes the game's impact on the construction of masculinity and American culture.

In 1990, Michael A Messner and Donald F. Sabo published an edited volume, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, that explores how sports “constructs and celebrates” masculinity. Michael S. Kimmel contributed a chapter to this volume titled “Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity, 1880 – 1920.” He argues, “The masculinity reconstituted on the ball field or in the bleachers was a masculinity that reinforced the unequal distribution of power based on class, race, and gender.” While Kimmel is correct, he tells what happened in baseball but does little to show how the sport reconstituted masculinity.¹¹

According to G. Edward White, in *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903-1953*, “By elevating certain players to stars, and eventually to Hall of Famers, it emphasized the heroic dimensions of playing major league baseball and the continuity of the game over time.”¹² White's focus on heroism remained confined to sports, but this study seeks to

¹¹ “Michael S. Kimmel, “Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity, 1880-1920,” in *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Michael A. Messner, (Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1990), 65.

¹² G. Edward White, *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903-1953*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 115-116.

uncover how Landis created a relationship between sports and a heroic manhood tied to civic obligations to the state.

Steven A. Riess mentions Landis' importance beyond baseball in *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era*. He states, "Baseball in the 1920s had a second important hero, commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, an ethical hero who redeemed baseball from the sins of the Black Sox. Under his strict leadership the sport regained its stature as the finest and noblest mass American institution."¹³ However, he makes this statement in the conclusion and simply asserts Landis's importance without demonstrating *what* Landis did to become an "ethical hero" beyond baseball. In these works, Landis sinks into the shadows after he resolves the Black Sox scandal. If baseball was important to American culture, and if Landis was the most powerful figure in baseball, why does the historiography lack a work that explains *how* Landis used the game to influence American culture and masculinity?

Chapter 1 explores how ideas about nationalism and manhood paved the way for baseball to become the predominant sport in America in the early twentieth century. Baseball's promoters asserted that the game originated in the United States and the invention of a Civil War hero, Abner Doubleday. Although baseball's origin story turned out to be a myth built on one man's boast, it served a vital part in baseball's claim that the sport was intrinsically American. The rise of athletics in America coincided with the closing of the frontier, which prompted social reformers to turn to sports as a solution to the crisis of masculinity. Sports helped to relieve the economic anxieties of industrialization and served as a way to promote exercise in a rapidly urbanizing nation. Progressive Era reformers believed that playing sports helped to combat the debilitating forces unleashed by industrialization. Baseball rose as the preferred sport in America

¹³ Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 224.

because the game retained a nostalgic appeal to the nation's past that also promoted civic pride. The rise of mass media helped to connect the local team to the identity of the city. Fans found the games to be entertaining and a shared experience with the players in the team's – and by extension, the city's – triumphs and setbacks. Baseball, in its contemporary form, also aligned with early twentieth-century ideas about race and gender.

Chapter 2 analyzes Organized Baseball's response to the demands placed on the nation when the United States entered the First World War. Baseball magnates argued that their greatest contribution to the war effort would be to continue playing baseball because it helped to maintain the nation's morale. Initially, the War Department agreed with club owners about baseball's wartime role, but as America entered the second year of fighting growing demands put more pressure on Organized Baseball. After decades of building the sport as a manly contest that taught skills and attitudes that prepared men for war, it was time for baseball to put up or shut up. The War Department issued a "Work or Fight" order that demanded ballplayers to demonstrate military preparedness. Nonetheless, profit-minded club owners wanted to continue playing the 1918 season. They kept players on the field, resisting the order. Even when players finally had to choose to "work" beyond baseball or "fight," the number who entered the military was much less than expected. This exposed baseball's patriotism as propaganda to grow profits for the owners. In reality, the drive for players and owners to model the ideals vital to civic-minded manhood was a flop.

Chapter 3 examines Organized Baseball's crisis after investigation revealed that gamblers had paid players to throw the 1919 World Series. Labeled by the media as the "Black Sox scandal," the news tarnished what remained of baseball's wholesome reputation. Club owners realized that if they wanted to save baseball, they had to move drastically to clean up the game's

image. They replaced Organized Baseball's three-man governing body with a single transformative arbiter hiring Federal Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis as commissioner. of the sport. Tasked with restoring Americans' faith in baseball, Landis believed that the sport required more than just a solution to the Black Sox scandal. Drawing upon the virtues of his father, a disabled Civil War veteran, Landis aimed to reshape the character of the sport, the men who played it, and the nation itself. Not even club owners could have predicted that their hire would be so revolutionary.¹⁴

Chapter 4 explores Landis' first two terms as commissioner when he laid the foundation for his campaign to reconstruct baseball's image and American manhood. While serving as commissioner, he also promoted the American Legion and worked to support the needs of disabled veterans of the First World War. He sought to honor ex-soldiers and that influenced decisions he made as commissioner. He believed that he could simultaneously restore baseball's reputation and recognize the sacrifices made by military veterans. He promoted "sportsmanship" in youth sports as admirable behavior exhibited by the best athletes, comparable to civic virtue. Sportsmanship taught America's youth to be honest, patriotic, and obedient citizens. Team sports like baseball, promoted the highest civic obligation, a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the greater good. Landis saved baseball by creating the sport as the pursuit of civic-minded manhood.

Landis' years of work to reform baseball and the nation culminates in chapter 5. When war erupted again in 1941, the United States entered the Second World War, professional baseball players responded to mobilization with a much greater sense of purpose than in the First

¹⁴ John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890 – 1920*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 202.

World War. Now ballplayers appeared to be as brave, patriotic, and masculine as the sport had portrayed them. All of this quickly changed. Landis' death combined with racial integration brought an end to Organized Baseball's stilted masculine ethos. Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color line, shattering the nation's idea of what a man might be. Professional baseball was ahead of white America in 1947, just barely and for the most reasons, but again its action was transformative.

While the current scholarship acknowledges baseball's importance to American culture and the nation's fears about a decline in masculine virtue, the two historiographies rarely overlap. This study seeks to uncover the people and events that politicized professional sports in America and to explore central questions of the American experience: How did sports solidify the relationship between masculinity and militarism? Why did baseball become the sport that served the interests of the nation as a core experience on the path to civic-minded and patriotic manhood? How did baseball strengthen and expand American nationalism? The answers to these questions can be found in the legacy of Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis. He transformed baseball from leisurely entertainment into an institution that taught Americans how to be patriotic citizens.

CHAPTER 2. MORE THAN A PASTIME

On July 12, 1893, the American Historical Association held a meeting in Chicago, Illinois. In attendance was historian Frederick Jackson Turner. He was there to present a paper titled, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” In what would become famously known as “The Frontier Thesis,” Turner posited that the story of American history could only be understood by studying westward expansion. He believed that the process of “civilizing” the American frontier had contributed to the unique character that could only be found in a native born American. To capture this idea, he recalled a comment made by a French minister in 1796 that suggested the French could not trust Americans because they were not European. Turner spun the quote to make a point about American Exceptionalism. He asserted that “the influence of the American wilderness, remote from Europe, and by its resources and its free opportunities affording the conditions under which a new people, with new social and political types and ideals, could arise to play its own part in the world, and to influence Europe.”¹⁵

By 1893, the American “wilderness” was no more. Turner acknowledged that nothing remained of the frontier other than the men who had tamed it. But what would happen to the future of American manhood if the frontier was gone? The nation faced a changing landscape where urbanization had consumed the wilderness, and mechanization replaced individualism. Modernity had encroached on the American landscape, and Turner wondered what the next chapter in American history would look like without a frontier to shape American character. But unknown to Turner on that day in 1893 was a solution to the problem he had raised. The future of American character could be found at the corner of 35th Street and South Wentworth Avenue

¹⁵ Frederick J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1921), vi.

in Chicago. That was the location of South Side Park II, home to the Colts, the city's professional baseball team.¹⁶

On December 5, 1856, an article appeared in the *New York Mercury* that addressed the growing popularity of a sport being played on open lots and pastures in the New York City vicinity. The article suggested that baseball, not cricket, was America's "national pastime."¹⁷ Although baseball had become a local favorite among New Yorkers by 1860, the game did not have a national presence as the editors of the *Mercury* asserted. In just under fifty years, however, baseball transformed from a regional game enjoyed by amateurs to the "national pastime" played by professionals. Baseball's rise as a prominent institution helped to shape American culture in the decades between the Civil War and the First World War. This process involved the labor of Civil War veterans, politicians, social reformers, entrepreneurs, and an array of influential figures in the United States working both within the sport and without it to shape baseball as much more than a game.

One of the pioneers who established professional baseball was a pitcher turned club owner, Albert Goodwill Spalding. He believed that baseball helped to distinguish the United States as "exceptional," creating a relationship between the sport and American nationalism.¹⁸ In 1888, Spalding organized a "baseball world tour" to prove the "truth" of both of the assumption. He formed two teams by recruiting some of the best players in the country who traveled to regions all around the globe to play in front of local spectators. He wanted to show off the

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all information related to historic baseball sites, player statistics, awards, game results from box scores, and results for Hall of Fame voting come from the Baseball Reference Website, www.baseball-reference.com.

¹⁷ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 150.

¹⁸ Francis D. Gogliano, "Baseball and American Exceptionalism," in ed. Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, *Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World*, (London, Routledge Press, 2004), 146.

athleticism of American ballplayers and the excitement of baseball. Although the tour did not have the international impact Spalding hoped it would, he demonstrated that baseball could be profitable and serve interests that helped the sport and reinforced beliefs about American nationalism.¹⁹

A more distinct ideal of nationalism emerged in the decades after the Civil War in response to emancipation and escalating immigration. President Benjamin Harrison, an Ohio colonel during the Civil War, believed that public education should teach patriotism in addition to the “three R’s.” One way to expose students to a patriotic lesson was to require them to recite a pledge that reminded them that they shared a common identity as Americans. The Christian socialist, Reverend Francis Bellamy wrote the “Pledge of Allegiance” in 1892 to mark the 400-year anniversary of Columbus’s voyage, contributing to Harrison’s reorientation of public education.²⁰ Instructors viewed the pledge as a means to assimilate immigrants to America. Elementary schools in New York used Civil War veteran Brevet Lieutenant Colonel George T. Balch’s salute as their “patriotic lesson,” which emphasized the importance of recognizing one language, under one God, and one flag. The pledges did not have to be identical because the ritual was more important. Reciting a pledge served as a process that engrained in children an identity as an American. Educators relied on a common practice that could inculcate “Americanism” in every student. Baseball offered them another process to teach patriotism.²¹

The expansion of public education brought more children into the classroom, but most teachers were women, and some men expressed concern about the development of young boys

¹⁹ Bill McMahon, “Albert Spalding,” SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/b99355e0>.

²⁰ Richard Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 14-16.

²¹ *Ibid*, 18.

under their tutelage. Rear Admiral French E. Chadwick, President of the Naval War College, believed that the presence of women teachers meant the “effeminization” of a future generation of men.²² In 1909, psychologist G. Stanley Hall likewise claimed that an education system overrun with an “army of female teachers” threatened to rob young boys of their manhood.²³ Reformers who worked to propagate the type of nationalism that relied on a new generation of brave and strong men believed that mass urbanization and industrialization threatened the masculine ideal they championed.

In 1858, Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson had published an essay, “Saints and Their Bodies,” that blamed an obsession with business for the lack of athleticism in adult men.²⁴ Higginson was not the only one who worried about the debilitating effects of industrialization. In 1881, neurologist George M. Beard believed he had identified symptoms that were direct result of an industrialized society. In *American Nervousness*, he described “neurasthenia” as complete exhaustion of the body. Capitalists obsessed over profits and workers spent hours laboring in dirty factory conditions. Both were exerting all their energy trying to make a living and that impaired the development of their manhood. If men living in an age of industrialization had no desire or motivation to pursue activities that instilled masculine behavior in them, American masculinity would wither away. An assistant surgeon in the navy during the Civil War, Beard believed that mass urbanization and industrialization had unleashed this new epidemic on America. This led physicians to search for a cure for conditions like “neurasthenia.” They

²² “Asserts Our Nation Hasn’t ‘Made Good’: Rear Admiral Chadwick Finds Baseball, Tariff, and Women Teachers to Blame,” (New York, NY) *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 1917.

²³ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 101.

²⁴ Thomas W. Higginson, “Saints and Bodies,” *Atlantic Monthly*, (March, 1858), 92.

believed healthy exercise was one solution, which meant finding ways to get people active outside of their occupations.²⁵

Anyone who accepted as fact the concerns of Higginson, Beard, Chadwick, and Hall, believed the country truly faced a “crisis of masculinity.” Ideas about manhood were generally tied to the male body and a man’s potential to prove his strength, bravery, and heroism.²⁶ The frontier had been a place where a man could demonstrate his strength over an “untamed” world. But that was closed. War was another realm where a man could show his will to triumph. The ideals of sacrifice, bravery, and fortitude that contributed to constructing American nationalism after the Civil War reinforced Social Darwinist ideas about war linking masculinity to militarism and nationalism.

When an explosion caused the U.S. battleship *Maine* to sink while docked in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, the United States Congress unanimously voted to go to war.²⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, the former statesman turned frontiersman back to statesman, believed he was ready for combat. He suggested that before the Civil War, boyhood had been more “rugged” and that boys who grew up in rural areas, or on the frontier, developed a natural athleticism. He claimed that their experiences in pre-industrialized and pre-urbanized America prepared them to become soldiers.²⁸ He formed a regiment of mounted “Rough Riders” to prove his manhood. The Spanish-American War offered a new generation of men the chance to see the combat that would

²⁵ John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and The Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 10-11.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁷ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 200

²⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, “The American Boy,” in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York: Century, 1900), 155.

baptize and confirm them as “manly, civic-minded” Americans who had helped to preserve democracy.²⁹ However, war was only a temporary answer to the “crisis of masculinity.” Progressive Era reformers believed that factory work in expanding cities led to neurasthenia. Social Darwinist ideologues warned that American manhood also risked further weakening because of mass immigration of “inferior” races that would weaken the gene pool. These threats were ongoing, and the nation would need a permanent solution to the “masculinity crisis.” The rise of sports offered one.

The proliferation of baseball in the late nineteenth century provided reformers with a new institution to fight the effeminizing effects of industrialization. Before 1861, there were about ninety baseball clubs in the United States mostly in major cities in New England and New York. After the war, interest in baseball swelled, generating over two hundred clubs in locations all over the country.³⁰ Baseball had grown so popular by the 1890s, that two professional leagues fought over territorial rights and fans. Eventually, the proprietors of the two leagues had agreed to join sides to maximize their profits. The National League and Western League (renamed the “American League”) formed the National Agreement in 1903 that created Organized Baseball’s sixteen-team league.³¹ Magnates of professional baseball believed they could grow their influence by proving that baseball was a uniquely American sport. So, they invented an origin story. In 1907, a report filed by Abraham G. Mills, a baseball pioneer and veteran of the Civil War, claimed that a Union officer by the name of Abner Doubleday, who had served at Fort Sumter, had invented the sport in 1839 in Cooperstown, New York. Mills and “baseball purists”

²⁹ Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 11.

³⁰ George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), ix.

³¹ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 150.

used the report to discredit those who suggested that baseball had evolved from an English game called rounders. Mills based the entirety of his conclusions on the testimony of one person, demonstrating the strong desire of baseball boosters to absolve it of any English ancestry and to prop up the game as uniquely American.³²

Spirit of the Times, a weekly newspaper published in New York targeting upper-class sportsmen, had asserted that baseball was superior because rounders was “a very simple game...entirely devoid of the manly features that characterize base-ball.”³³ In an attempt to boost baseball’s appeal, *Spirit of the Times* also claimed that, “There is nothing to prevent a base-ball player’s uniform from being as well known as that of a United States soldier.”³⁴ The game’s real and constructed connection to the Civil War supported a belief that a relationship existed between baseball and nationalism reliant on masculine virtue. Promoters could advertise that playing baseball exposed participants to something distinctly American, which also served to teach patriotism. Leading reformers relied on the trope of the brave soldier as the foundation for the type of patriotism required to inculcate a new generation of Americans with nationalist sentiments.³⁵ The Civil War generation promoted the sacrifice of brave and virile men as central to the idea of the nation. Children of that generation idealized that sacrifice growing into the leaders of the Progressive Era. They continued teaching nationalism as a unifying force

³² Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 9-10.

³³ Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, 7-9.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 89.

³⁵ John Horne, “Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850 – 1950,” in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 28.

upholding masculinity as a virtue to be celebrated.³⁶ By the 1900s, leading reformers began promoting team sports and other forms of exercise as another way to invigorate manhood.³⁷

The Mills Report declared that baseball served as the ideal sport to promote the ideals essential to sustain American nationalism. In 1910, Joseph Lee, a Boston philanthropist, created the Playground Association of America (PAA) to curb juvenile delinquency. Like other civic reform movements, the PAA became increasingly organized and commercialized promoting the moral and social benefits of sports.³⁸ The PAA solidified the growing “Play Movement,” which built playgrounds and parks in major urban centers in the war to offset neurasthenia.³⁹ Lee believed that urbanization and overwork worked to the detriment of the physical and moral development of principled citizens.⁴⁰ In *Constructive and Preventive Philanthropy*, he wrote that “Open air, danger, ruggedness, and participation in team sports” were necessary prerequisites for developing full humanity.⁴¹

Theodore Roosevelt also served as a member of the PAA, advocating for sports as a domain that prepared boys for manhood. After the Spanish-American War, he argued that sports were the most effective way to ingrain masculine characteristics in young boys.⁴² Roosevelt understood that children in cities needed a place to play sports, and the PAA’s efforts to build

³⁶ Horne, “Masculinity in Politics and War,” 28.

³⁷ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 15.

³⁸ Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), xi.

³⁹ Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 3.

⁴⁰ Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850 – 1920*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 108.

⁴¹ Joseph Lee, *Constructive and Preventive Philanthropy*, (MacMillan: New York, 1902), ix.

⁴² Theodore Roosevelt, “The American Boy,” in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York: Century, 1900), 155.

playgrounds would carve out that space. With the frontier “closed” and the rural population declining, Roosevelt agreed with the muckraking journalist and honorary vice president of the PAA Jacob Riis that the playground was “where the boy grows into the man.”⁴³ The leading advocates for the PAA emphasized the need for “athletic, rugged” men as crucial to the survival of the nation. Only boys who developed strong masculine traits could grow into the leaders of tomorrow, capable of defending American principles. The country also needed athletic men who could be easily transformed into soldiers if needed. The playground became one of the early training grounds for war for American boys.

Masculine sports culture evolved in tandem with American militarism as the nation “came of age” at the turn of the century.⁴⁴ Military officers also used sports to develop traits ideal for soldiering. Major-General Leonard Wood, a former “Rough Rider,” was one of the first commanders to promote athletic training as an adjunct to drill while he served as the Army Chief of Staff in the early 1900s. He believed that sports helped to instill in troops the values of teamwork and cooperation.⁴⁵ Requiring men at military training camps to play together in team sports – subject to commonly understood rules – provided a mechanism for homogenizing a diverse group into a unified fighting force.⁴⁶ The British Army’s 1908 *Physical Training Manual* asserted that “Games and physical training should be looked upon as complimentary to one another.”⁴⁷ The United States employed similar practices. During the occupation of the

⁴³ Lee, *Constructive and Preventive Philanthropy*, vii.

⁴⁴ Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 242.

⁴⁵ Wanda Ellen Wakefield, *Playing to Win: Sports and the American Military, 1898-1945*, (Albany: State University of New York Press: 1997), 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 15.

⁴⁷ Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces, 1880-1960*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4

Philippines, American forces established an Amateur Athletic Federation with the primary goal of “acculturating Filipinos to American values.”⁴⁸ The Filipino Amateur Athletic Federation represented an alternative way for the U.S. to export American nationalism. The masculinity promoted within the army was analogous with that of the civic reform movements of the Progressive Era. Military preparedness grew intertwined with the goals of the Playground Association of America. They both turned to sports to inculcate the characteristics that were essential to building manhood.⁴⁹

Progressive Era reforms to the education system placed a greater emphasis on athletics as a means to cultivate common values among students with differing social and ethnic backgrounds. Reformers touted extracurricular activities, including school sports, as one of the means to Americanize students, which they say as essential to building a functioning democracy. According to Luther Halsey Gulick, a founder of the New York Public Schools’ Athletic League, “Morality...cannot be learned from books or lectures. For nothing else begins to have a grip on the imagination and emotional life of our young men as do...athletics.”⁵⁰ Sports also offered a compromise between those who wanted compulsory military training in schools and those who believed that combat drills were too authoritarian.

When the United States entered the First World War in April 1917, John L. Griffith resigned as physical education instructor and football coach from Drake University. He enlisted in the army and spent the war years as athletic director at Camp Dodge in Des Moines, Iowa.

⁴⁸ Gerald R. Gems, “The American Imperial Crusade: Race, Religion, and Sport in the Pacific,” in *Race and Sport: The Struggle for Equality On and Off the Field*, ed. Charles K. Ross, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 110.

⁴⁹ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 14.

⁵⁰ Timothy P. O’Hanlon, “School Sports as Social Training: The Case of Athletics and the Crisis of World War I,” in *Sport in America: From Wicked Amusement to National Obsession*, ed. David K. Wiggins, (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1995), 193.

Griffith helped convince military officials that athletics instilled the same outcomes as military drills.⁵¹ Athletes “fought to win,” declared Griffith, who became the Commissioner of Athletics of the Big Ten Conference in 1922. His choice to use “fight” instead of “play” embodied the ease with which the language of war and sport became interchangeable.⁵² When social reformers and military leaders equated war with the challenges and rewards of competition in sports, they heightened the importance of athletics while numbing the realities of combat.⁵³ In 1910, the book *Baseball in the Big Leagues* declared that baseball had “reached an almost feudal stage,” asserting that cities with professional teams took “the same pride and interest [in baseball] as the cities of mediaeval Europe did to their chosen bands of warrior knights.” The description went on to equate a pennant race with civil warfare.⁵⁴

Baseball was a team sport that taught camaraderie and behavior essential for an effective fighting unit. But at the turn of the century, boxing remained popular as well and competed with baseball as the preferred spectator sport in America. Boxer John L. Sullivan emerged as the nation’s most popular sports icon after he became the world heavyweight champion in 1882. The champion’s rough masculinity appealed to those who feared that life in an increasingly urbanized United States was too sedentary. In the late 1800s, boxing⁵⁵ Even though Sullivan’s title did not survive beyond 1892 (he had lost it to Jim Corbett in twenty-one rounds), the nation embraced

⁵¹ Lindaman, *Fit for America*, 39.

⁵² Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and consumer Culture, 1900-1950*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 200), 120.

⁵³ Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 200.

⁵⁴ Johnnie Evers, *Baseball in the Big Leagues*, (Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Company, 1910), 14.

⁵⁵ Christopher Klein, *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan America’s First Sports Hero*, (Guilford: Lyon Press, 2013), 81.

the violent heroics of athletes.⁵⁶ Boxing retained a hold on the nation because it resembled a live performance of the theory of Social Darwinism, which emphasized a racial order to society. Progressive Era ideas about male power derived from a belief in white supremacy, revealing Americans' obsession with the connection between manhood and racial dominance.⁵⁷

After the Civil War, Americans grappled with healing the nation while simultaneously building a path to social equality for African Americans freed from centuries of bondage. The reunion of North and South was won by affirming the version of white supremacy that the South used to justify Jim Crow laws.⁵⁸ In the early twentieth century, baseball was a sport that reinforced America's racial caste system, a quality which also contributed to its rise as the National Pastime. Boxing was never fully segregated, and the emergence of a black boxer, John Arthur "Jack" Johnson, posed a threat to the world of white boxing and the sport's claim to serve as an institution that taught the masculine ideal at the center of American nationalism. Johnson's heavyweight title fight with Jim Jeffries explicitly challenged the belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race constructed by those who built ideas about manhood out of racial prejudice.⁵⁹

In 1908, Canadian Tommy Burns, the white heavyweight champion, had agreed to fight Johnson because he needed money and thought the bout would provide him with a big payout. Burns received his pay, plus a hellacious pummeling by Johnson. Many white Americans were furious that a black man was heavyweight champion. Some white journalists – in hopes of vindicating white manhood – reached out to Jim Jeffries, the former white heavyweight

⁵⁶ Ibid, 222.

⁵⁷ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and The Perfect Man*, 19.

⁵⁸ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.

⁵⁹ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 42.

champion who retired in 1905 as “the great white hope.” Eventually, Jeffries agreed to fight Johnson, and the match was set for July 4, 1910 in Reno, Nevada.⁶⁰

Jeffries commented on the fight the night before, and his words echoed Social Darwinist ideology. He knew that his boxing record was not the only thing on the line in the fight. “When the gloves are knotted on my hands tomorrow afternoon and I stand ready to defend what is really my title,” Jeffries stated, “it will be at the request of the public, who forced me out of retirement. I realize full well just what depends on me, and I am not going to disappoint the... portion of the white race that has been looking to me to defend its athletic supremacy.” Jack Johnson seldom missed a chance to rile up white America: “I honestly believe that in pugilism I am Jeffries’ master and it is my purpose to demonstrate this in the most decisive way possible. I am going to win.”⁶¹ Jeffries, and the hopes of white America, got pasted. *The Baltimore Sun* declared, “The greatest battle of the century was a monologue delivered to 20,000 spectators by a smiling negro who was never in doubt.”⁶²

After Johnson’s victory, race riots broke out in every southern state, Washington D.C., Colorado, and places in between. Johnson’s public acknowledgment that he enjoyed the company of white women further enraged white America. When authorities discovered Johnson’s affair with Lucille Cameron, an eighteen-year-old blonde from Minnesota, they charged him with violating the Mann Act, which made it illegal to transport a prostitute across

⁶⁰ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 1-4.

⁶¹ “Both Fighters Sure of Result: ‘I Will Beat Johnson,’ Jeffries Declares, ‘I am Jeffries’ Master,’ Jack Johnson Says,” (Boston, MA), *Boston Daily Globe*, July 4, 1910.

⁶² Jack London, “Jeffries Falls a Victim: He is Like a Child in the Arms of The Master Johnson,” (Baltimore, MD), *Baltimore Sun*, July 5, 1910.

state lines. Although there was no basis for the charge, the Bureau of Investigation fabricated evidence incriminating Johnson and sentenced him to a year in prison.⁶³

Athletic excellence was a marker of the superiority of a man's body, and character too. The success of black athletes like Jack Johnson challenged Social-Darwinist ideology that assumed the inferiority of African Americans relative to whites. If leading reformers believed that white athletes were the only ones capable of modeling the patriotic characteristics vital to the success of American nationalism, then only a fully segregated sport could serve that process.⁶⁴ In 1913, William McKeever suggested that the nation already had that sport, "No boy can grow to a perfectly normal manhood today," he wrote, "without the benefits of at least a small amount of baseball experience and practice."⁶⁵

Baseball mirrored and enforced the nation's racial segregation, which helped former Confederate states align with the North to embrace the sport's place as "America's Pastime." Unlike boxing, baseball began removing black professionals from its ranks not long after John L. Sullivan became heavyweight champion. In 1887, when John "Bud" Fowler, a black professional ballplayer, reported to play for the baseball team in Binghamton, New York, two white teammates refused to play with him. The team released Fowler, and the owners of other professional teams refused to sign him on account of race.⁶⁶ This established the beginning of the "gentlemen's agreement" banning black ballplayers from playing professionally alongside their

⁶³ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 9.

⁶⁴ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 5-6.

⁶⁵ Kimmel, "Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity," 64.

⁶⁶ Brian McKenna, "Bud Fowler" SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/200e2bbd>.

white counterparts. Two years later, the last professional black baseball player on a white team went unsigned, solidifying professional baseball as fully racially segregated.⁶⁷

All-white professional ball teams reinforced a claim that white ballplayers were the only men who possessed the skill to perform as professionals.⁶⁸ They were the only ones capable of achieving the level of athleticism required of a professional, which also portrayed white men as the only ones capable of achieving the physicality required to reach full manhood. The owners of professional teams took an additional step to ensure that white players would not compete against black players. They distinguished their league as “Organized Baseball,” which was “superior,” and labeled all others “outlaw” leagues.⁶⁹ Organized Baseball did not face the outrage of white America or the white media in the same way boxing did when Jack Johnson became the heavyweight champion. Organized Baseball became an institution built and sustained by white America, for white America.

Baseball also aided the process of reconciliation after the Civil War. In 1866, when the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), the first organization governing American baseball, looked for a new president, the *American Republican and Baltimore Daily Clipper* suggested Arthur P. Gorman. He had helped organize the first baseball team in Washington, D.C., but because he originated from Maryland, widely portrayed as a “Southern state,” the *Clipper* suggested that appointing him, “should prove to the world that sectionalism is unknown in our national game.”⁷⁰ In October of 1868, a baseball game played in Fayetteville, Tennessee,

⁶⁷ Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10-11.

⁶⁸ Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 2.

⁶⁹ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 15.

⁷⁰ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 122

between a team of “nine Carpetbaggers” from Philadelphia and a Ku Klux Klan symbolized a common interest that was crucial to healing after the sectional conflict.⁷¹ Baseball games facilitated a friendly competition that resembled the look of a reunified nation. White America was willing to embrace anything that fostered reunification of North and South.

By the early twentieth century, critics of industrialization realized that leisure activities could incite sentiments of loyalty to a city, state, and the nation.⁷² The owners of Organized Baseball teams realized that the sport held a privileged place in American culture. Club owners already had the support of working class Americans, and they knew that transforming upper- and middle-class white Americans into life-long fans would grow their profits.⁷³ Ballpark construction between 1908 and 1923 fostered an implicit conviction among those closest to major league baseball that the sport had become “permanently” established and linked to the identity of certain American cities. As baseball’s popularity grew, magnates in the sport placed greater demands on the players to enhance the respectability of the sport. Whatever their individual backgrounds, ballplayers had to project a public image of propriety. From 1902 to 1906, Organized Baseball implemented a dress code, empowered umpires to fine players or eject them for bad behavior. They began investing in brick and concrete stadiums that symbolized a permanency the sport needed to boost its prestige.⁷⁴ Social reformers integrated baseball into the “organized play” movement, which sought to promote assimilation through organized, regulated clubs and leagues. Reformers looked to professional baseball as a means to build civic pride and

⁷¹ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 115-116.

⁷² Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America*, 91.

⁷³ Burgos, *Playing America’s Game*, 24.

⁷⁴ Robert F. Burk, *Never Just a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 171.

bolster nationalism.⁷⁵ Residents of cities with professional baseball teams believed that their team showings proved their town's worth and character. Therefore, cheering on a winner was imperative.⁷⁶

Baseball owners knew that fans wanted to root for a "local favorite," which required each team to reserve the right to retain a player's services, year after year. Organized Baseball's reserve clause acted as a kind of indentured servitude for professional baseball players. The clause bound every player to the team that originally signed him, and he could not break the agreement, without risking being "blacklisted" from the league. Despite the limitations placed on players through the reserve clause, fans of professional baseball teams developed an almost familial relationship with the men on the rosters because of the familiarity of their faces season-after-season. In an industrializing society in which a feeling of loss was easy to encounter, especially for working-class Americans, the hometown team provided a sense of comfort, and a reminder of a more stable world.⁷⁷

The permanency of rosters appealed to working- and middle-class Americans, and baseball's Social Darwinist competitiveness reinforced hegemonic ideas about twentieth-century capitalism. In baseball, the more athletic, and therefore "superior" players exhibited more masculine behavior, just as in capitalist society, a man's achievement defined his manliness.⁷⁸ Affluent businessmen related to professional ballplayers because they believed they both were

⁷⁵ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 7.

⁷⁶ Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 204.

⁷⁷ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 59.

⁷⁸ Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 286.

atop the social ladder that naturally advanced real men through their “hard work” and capabilities.

The success of Organized Baseball in the early twentieth century contributed to the development of a white masculine ethos built through athleticism. A 1910 survey reinforced the idea that a boy needed to know how to play baseball if he hoped to acquire the traits necessary to become a successful man. The survey revealed that all members of the House of Representatives played the game as boys, except two – one partially blind and another physically disabled.⁷⁹ This helped strengthen the belief that baseball was, in some way, a “rite of passage” for all American boys, especially those who aspired to be the leaders of tomorrow. Media depictions of baseball as intrinsically American served as propaganda for the sport, which entrenched it as a leading cultural institution in the United States in the minds of Americans.

The expansion of American journalism into sports coverage helped turn prominent athletes into celebrities who reinforced the masculine ideal that reformers worked to assert. From 1892 to 1914, the number of daily newspapers rose by more than a third and circulation doubled, which fed a larger percentage of Americans with news about sporting events.⁸⁰ The proliferation of baseball coverage in newspapers and magazines coincided with the rise of mass media that amplified and intensified the growth of celebrity culture in early twentieth-century America. Stories about common people in rare, and sometimes improbable, situations aroused intense interest. From murderer Ruth Snyder, to Bonnie and Clyde, the belief that normal, everyday people could be capable of unimaginable acts sparked people’s interests.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Johnnie Evers, *Baseball in the Big Leagues*, (Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Company, 1910), 14-15.

⁸⁰ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and The Perfect Man*, 15.

⁸¹ Charles J. Shindo, *1927 and the Rise of Modern America*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 106.

Ballplayers were no different in their ascension to celebrity status. They were ordinary – because they were not physically intimidating in size and stature, yet extraordinary – because they were capable of performing a physical skill that demanded great athleticism and discipline. Sportswriters aided baseball players’ ascension to star-like status by writing about them in a way that gripped the imagination of Americans. Journalists like Grantland Rice invoked myths about baseball in his accounts that transformed ballplayers into heroic figures.⁸² Unlike the heroes imagined in Greek mythology, who were flawed, American heroes had the myth of American exceptionalism to uphold.⁸³ A manufactured attachment to a local baseball star, on who invoked positive ideas about ideal manhood, also aided in the production of an identity that was both regional and national. From the ruthless style of Ty Cobb, to the humble demeanor of an uneducated bumpkin in “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, to the pristine and principled pitcher in Christy Mathewson, baseball had men who appealed to an eclectic array of fans unified by the common interest in the sport.

Ty Cobb debuted with the Detroit Tigers in 1905, and in only his third season, at the age of twenty, was the league leader in hits, batting average, runs batted in (RBI), and stolen bases.⁸⁴ His skills enabled him to amass record-setting statistics, which provided proof to many fans and sportswriters that he deserved the label as the best. By 1910, Cobb earned the title of “world’s greatest baseball player.”⁸⁵ He encompassed the traits also believed to be essential to a version of

⁸² Shindo, *1927 and the Rise of Modern America*, 113-114.

⁸³ Ray Robinson, *Matty, An American Hero: Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

⁸⁴ Unless otherwise noted, references to player statistics, awards, game results from box scores, and results for Hall of Fame voting come from the Baseball Reference Website, www.baseball-reference.com.

⁸⁵ “Ty Cobb Greatest Baseball Player: Comiskey Tells Why the Detroit Fielder Stands Alone in the Game,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Tribune*, April 17, 1910.

masculinity worth emulating. When sportswriters talked about Cobb's baseball prowess, they directly or indirectly spoke to his manliness. The publisher of *Baseball Magazine*, F.C. Lane, wrote that "nerve, agility, quick thinking, speed, strength, concentration, and self-reliance" were the "the recreative embodiment" of American manhood.⁸⁶ "If [Cobb] confesses that a certain play is beyond him," declared *Baseball America*, "It simply cannot be done."⁸⁷

Admiring Cobb's baseball skills was easy; dealing with his abrasive behavior was unendingly hard. He demonstrated early in his career that he was quick to anger. He became enraged whenever he believed anyone had sullied his honor. He assaulted a ground's crewman, climbed into the stands to fight a fan, and boasted about sliding into bases brandishing his metal cleats to intimidate his opponents. Cobb's relentless demeanor and cutthroat style of play appealed to Social Darwinist ideologues. His words justified their admiration:

"Baseball is a red-blooded sport for red-blooded men. It's no pink tea, and mollycoddles had better stay out. It's a contest and everything that implies, a struggle for supremacy, a survival of the fittest. Every man in the game, from the minors on up, is not only fighting against the other side, but he's trying to hold onto his own job against those on his own bench who'd love to take it away. Why deny this? Why minimize it? Why not boldly admit it?"⁸⁸

Champions of American capitalism celebrated "free market" competition as an ultimate equalizer for the economy. Cobb was the face of a type of manhood that was unapologetic about doing whatever it took to reach success. In a highly competitive sport – so similar to a free-market economy – why should a man express any remorse for outplaying his opponent?

⁸⁶ Stephen Elliot Tripp, *Ty Cobb, Baseball, and American Manhood*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 241.

⁸⁷ "Ty Cobb, Greatest Ball Player, Explains Why He is Always Up to Some Trick," *Los Angeles Times*, (Los Angeles, CA), July 2, 1916.

⁸⁸ Numerous publications that detail Ty Cobb's life mention his pugnacious personality, but the most thorough biography is Al Stump, *Cobb: A Biography*, (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1994).

Determined and strong-willed men strengthened America's economy, and Cobb embodied those traits as a player on the ball diamond.

The second greatest hitter of the early twentieth century who competed with Cobb year-in-and-year out for the batting title was Joseph Jefferson Wofford Jackson. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson hailed from Greenville, South Carolina and was the antithesis of Ty Cobb. Jackson was reserved and avoided confrontation. The media often portrayed Cobb's accomplishments as "scientific" because he studied pitchers' strengths and weaknesses, hoping to find an advantage, but they attributed Jackson's success to his "natural" swing. By 1913, players and fans saw Jackson as the more athletic hitter – relying on his strength and superior eye-hand coordination to be among the top batters in the sport.⁸⁹ Another widely publicized fact about Jackson was his lack of education. He was notoriously illiterate and relied on his wife to help read and sign his contracts. "Shoeless" Joe's first manager, Connie Mack, offered to hire him a tutor, but Jackson declined. He insisted, "I ain't afraid to tell the world that it don't take school stuff to help a fella play ball."⁹⁰ Attempts by major newspapers to frame "Shoeless" Joe as an ignorant country boy did little to tarnish his image with baseball fans.⁹¹ Jackson's simplistic approach to the game appealed to working-class men who may not have understood the complexities of Wall Street but believed that their hard work helped maintain proof of their manhood.

One player who never battled an image problem and became Organized Baseball's poster child of wholesomeness was New York Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson. The son of a Civil War veteran who was born in Factoryville, Pennsylvania, Mathewson led all pitchers in earned

⁸⁹ Kelly Boyer Sagert, *Joe Jackson: A Biography*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 71-72.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 33-34.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 102.

run average (ERA) and strikeouts five times in his first twelve seasons as a professional player. What made Mathewson even more remarkable in the eyes of fans was his admirable character. According to those who played with him, against him, and who covered his playing career, he was “clean, honest, righteous, and sterling in character, [and] he was an honor to all athletics.” Mathewson also dispelled an assumption that professional ballplayers were unsavory fellows. He was an incarnation of a lost time some believed existed before the hyper-competition unleashed by modern capitalism stripped men of their honesty. He represented the “goodness” many Americans wanted to see in themselves, in their neighbors, and in their country. He was lauded as an example of a refined ideal of manhood. His character suggested that a man did not have to forfeit his integrity to find success.⁹²

What made Cobb, Jackson, and Mathewson celebrities was their remarkable skills as ballplayers in a widely popular American sport. Every professional baseball team had players the local and national media fashioned into icons. Walter Johnson, Honus Wagner, and Tris Speaker had also become household names. The propaganda employed by the media, politicians, and other institutions that promoted baseball as a masculine pastime, provided the conditions under which any player could become an admirable hero. Many of the players only shared two qualities: their remarkable talent and their whiteness. The process of manufacturing heroes through the sport also reinforced assumptions about race. The public accepted white men who played baseball as icons worth emulating despite the downfalls of their character. Racial segregation in baseball kept the process of manufacturing heroes purely white as well. The media and public did not vilify Ty Cobb’s cockiness as they did Jack Johnson’s.⁹³ The baseball hero

⁹² *Bucknell Alumni Monthly*, Vol. X, No. 2, November 1925.

⁹³ After the conclusion of the 1912 baseball season, Ty Cobb refused to sign his contract with the Detroit Tigers until the team agreed to raise his salary. His holdout lasted until April 25, 1913 when he finally agreed to a new

ethos maintained a distinct look that demonstrated the power baseball possessed in building an ideal of masculinity relatable to white America.

By the time representatives of the American and National leagues signed the “National Agreement” in 1903, only white men could become professional players.⁹⁴ Baseball mirrored the racial bifurcation of American society, which placed the skills and abilities of white ballplayers above black players. Professional baseball was a social institution in which difference became manifest in its economic, cultural, and social policies.⁹⁵ Segregation was the result of an imposed meaning on biological conditions, and it reinforced how race influenced the negotiation of power and the meaning of difference in institutions like sports.⁹⁶ Using men like Cobb, Jackson, and Mathewson, owners remained committed to presenting an appealing white product to white spectators.⁹⁷

Black baseball players formed their own professional teams, and by 1920 formed a professional league. Separate, but not believed to be equal in talent, the Negro Leagues allowed black athletes to compete in America’s pastime. Black periodicals like the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American* devoted space each week to cover the Negro Leagues in a fashion similar to how the white media covered Organized Baseball. Some black sportswriters also kept hope that white fans who cared about good baseball would take

contract with Detroit. His act was unprecedented at a time when players refrained from making their contract disputes public. “Cobb Signs Contract: Tyrus Says It’s His Last Holdout, And Seems Pleased,” (Baltimore, MD), *The Baltimore Sun*, April 26, 1913.

⁹⁴ The National Agreement formed the league that is known today as “Major League Baseball.”

⁹⁵ Burgos, *Playing America’s Game*, 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 5-6.

⁹⁷ Burk, *Never Just a Game*, 88.

interest in the Negro Leagues.⁹⁸ Perhaps they did. But racial biases limited the influence black baseball players had on the masculine ideal the white media shaped through the likeness of white players. Black social reformers never fully embraced sports as a means to achieve racial progress.⁹⁹ Perhaps the treatment of Jack Johnson soured some on the hope that sports icons could help convince white America that African Americans deserved social equality.

In the decades leading up to the First World War, the owners and promoters of Organized Baseball worked to construct the sport as the “National Pastime.” The sports media helped baseball ascend as an influential cultural institution by presenting the Mills Commission report as fact that a Civil War hero invented baseball. This enhanced baseball’s “exceptionalism.” If Americans believed that a war hero had invented baseball, then other institutions could promote and exploit the rise of baseball in the United States. The process of Americanization required a network of dependency across the institutions that were responsible for inculcating nationalism. When “Shoeless” Joe Jackson laid down a bunt to move a runner into scoring position, he taught the value of sacrificing oneself for the greater good. When Ty Cobb succeeded at stretching a single into a double, he reinforced that the perfect combination of confidence and aggression were ideal masculine characteristics. Christy Matthewson’s humble dominance reminded Americans about the importance of moral and virtuous leadership. When people believed that by playing or watching baseball they might acquire traits that were crucial to their identity as Americans, it provided incentives for government agencies and the military to promote the sport as intrinsically American. If manliness was the achievement of a perfect man, then the continued

⁹⁸ Mark Ribowsky, *A Complete History of the Negro Leagues, 1884 to 1955*, (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1995), xvii.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

strength of a nation relied on the development of strong, brave, and patriotic men.¹⁰⁰ Baseball mattered because it helped to shape a dutiful citizenry that supplied the needs of American institutions.

And yet, above all, it had to pay. Despite baseball's role in building nationalism and manhood, the demands of war forced Organized Baseball's magnates to protect their profits instead of protecting the sport's image. If baseball was a training ground for masculinity where a boy developed into a "true, red-blooded American man," what happened when the First World War threatened to disrupt the cultural reciprocity of sports and war?

¹⁰⁰ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 27.

CHAPTER 3. A SHAMEFUL SPECTACLE

In the decades that preceded American entry in the World War, the intersection of sport and war produced a culture in which baseball helped to reinforce ideas about nationalism. Albert Spalding himself proclaimed that baseball was a war. He asserted that playing the sport “required every faculty of brain and body that arouses no brutal instincts.” He described the players as combatants who relied more on a “war of skill than of strength.” August “Garry” Herrmann, the owner of the Cincinnati Reds and member of Organized Baseball’s National Commission, asserted that “[Baseball] tends to develop athletic ability and encourage love for athletic prowess which are the foundations of a strong military organization.”¹⁰¹ The culture of sport mimicked the culture of war: masculine actors trained to outthink and defeat their opponent while ardent followers supported their cause.¹⁰² The local baseball hero fought to win for the fans. After the United States entered the war in April 1917, would Americans expect ballplayers to do more than serve as surrogates to soldiering? Would Americans ask that ballplayers demonstrate the masculine ideals that promoters suggested had always been intrinsic in them?

The expansion of the state as a result of the war directly challenged Organized Baseball’s claim that playing baseball served as a process that created civic-minded manhood. As the nation mobilized for war, the prominent American evangelist Billy Sunday declared, “Baseball is a war game. We need it now more than ever.” The club owners of Organized Baseball agreed. Sunday was not suggesting that baseball should shut down so players could enlist in the service. He believed that a nation at war needed baseball to boost morale.¹⁰³ Herrmann summed up

¹⁰¹ August Herrmann, “Baseball’s Immediate Future,” *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 19, No. 3, July 1917.

¹⁰² Stephen Elliot Tripp, *Ty Cobb, Baseball, and American Manhood*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 234.

¹⁰³ Joseph Potts to August Herrmann, June 11, 1917, “August Herrmann Collection,” Box 5, Folder 26, National

Organized Baseball's greater purpose in the war effort, "Baseball is peculiarly a soldier's and sailor's game. Every unit of our army which follows the flag on foreign fields is officered by and equipped by graduates of the diamond. Baseball adds the necessary element of interest to military life and justifies its existence by that act alone."¹⁰⁴ Sunday and the owners contended that baseball, the "American Pastime," was the sport best suited to maintain the nation's morale at home, and the soldiers' abroad.

In the spring of 1917, Organized Baseball's club owners began their campaign to convince Americans that they needed baseball to maintain their fighting spirit during the war. Colonel Tillinghast L'Hommedieu (T.L.) Huston, a part owner of the New York Yankees and a veteran of the Spanish-American War, hired a drill sergeant to lead players in military drills at their spring training facility in Macon, Georgia. "Huston is working on a scheme," the *New York Tribune* commented, "whereby he hopes to make the influence of organized baseball deeply felt as a power to patriotism and action."¹⁰⁵ The other seven teams in the American League, and two in the National League, followed Huston's lead, hiring drillmasters.¹⁰⁶ "These Pictures Prove Tigers are Not Slackers," the April 12 issue of *The Sporting News* trumpeted, showing the Detroit Tigers in military formation, under the direction of a drill sergeant.¹⁰⁷ They may have been carrying bats instead of bayonets, but the appearance of ballplayers in drill formation helped reinforce the claim that the National Pastime was behind the war effort.

Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁰⁴ August Herrmann, "Baseball's Immediate Future," *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 19, No. 3, July 1917.

¹⁰⁵ Jim Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ "These Pictures Prove Tigers are Not Slackers," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 63, No. 5, April 12, 1917.

The owners wanted to ensure that Organized Baseball appeared fully committed to the war. That meant doing much more than marching ballplayers in formation. Two of the most powerful owners in baseball, Charles Ebbets of the Brooklyn Robins and Charles Comiskey of the Chicago White Sox, turned their business offices into military recruiting stations. Teams in both leagues opened their parks for government officials to sell war bonds during games.¹⁰⁸ Clark Griffith, part owner of the Washington Senators, launched a fund with the goal of collecting and raising money to purchase baseball equipment and paraphernalia for soldiers in military training camps in the U.S. and those stationed in Europe.¹⁰⁹ Griffith's "Bat and Ball Fund" supplied troops with equipment to play the American Pastime.

With no reason to doubt that their actions best served the war effort well, club owners planned to play the entirety of the 154-game schedule for 1917. They believed that baseball had to continue because the nation required a morale boost. In the early months of the season, Organized Baseball's performance of patriotism was so effective that some believed that the war would actually benefit the game. "War Effect Will be Boom to Baseball," Burt Whitman told *Sporting News* readers, asserting that military training camps would expand Organized Baseball's fanbase. According to Whitman, American men with little-to-no knowledge of baseball would find themselves in the same camps as those well-versed in the game. The presence of spectator experts who could teach the sport to novices would help grow interest in baseball and profits for the owners.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 19-20.

¹¹⁰ Burt Whitman, "War Effect Will Be Boom To Baseball," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 63, No. 11, May 24, 1917.

Two months into the 1917 season, the Boston Red Sox were in first place in the American League thanks to the performance of their rising star, George Herman Ruth, and John McGraw's New York Giants were atop the National League standings. But the headlines focused on Hank Gowdy, a catcher for the Boston Braves. On June 1, Gowdy announced that he had enlisted in the Ohio National Guard because he did not want to be conscripted.¹¹¹ Congress had passed the Selective Service Act in May establishing June 5, 1917 as the first registration day in America. Henceforth, all able-bodied men between twenty-one and thirty had to report to local draft boards to register for military service. President Wilson declared that the draft was really a "selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass," to remind American men that their country appreciated their labor.¹¹² Secretary of War Newton D. Baker orchestrated a coordinated campaign across local and national levels of government to make registration day a "festival and patriotic occasion." Still, Oklahoma Senator Thomas Gore suggested that all men "earn the glory of an American volunteer" before they were drafted.¹¹³

Gowdy did not frame his decision to join as a pursuit of glory, but rather as a matter of obligation. "I had no excuse so far as I could see, for not offering my services," he explained. "I wouldn't feel content to stay on this side of the Atlantic in comparative security and know that others were bearing the brunt across the ocean." Gowdy was not sure if his time playing baseball had fully prepared him for war, but he felt confident that the game had kept him in top physical

¹¹¹ "Catcher Gowdy Joins U.S. Army," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Tribune*, June 3, 1917.

¹¹² David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 150.

¹¹³ Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

shape.¹¹⁴ Volunteering demonstrated his patriotism and manhood – and it worked. The staff of *The Sporting News* called on fans to “salute Sergeant Gowdy” as a true American.¹¹⁵ Christy Mathewson described him as “a man’s sized man all through,” and predicted that other ballplayers would follow him into the service.¹¹⁶ Baseball magnates welcomed the publicity Gowdy brought to the game. He represented the patriotic character the club owners wanted all fans to believe was innate to the men who played professional baseball. If a popular star was willing to risk his life for his country, then so should the average American.

Organized Baseball assisted government propaganda that aimed to rally the nation behind the war cause. However, as the exigencies of war placed greater demands on mobilization, the American government began limiting freedoms in the quest to preserve liberty. On June 15, 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act, which criminalized opposition to the war. Government agencies had already identified the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as a threat to American democracy. Their pro-union, anti-war, socialist stance further enraged government officials who instigated more aggressive tactics against members of the group.¹¹⁷ The state of Washington convicted an IWW member Frank Lowery on charges of criminal anarchy for distributing pro-IWW pamphlets despite Lowery’s claim that he did not hold all the beliefs of the IWW.¹¹⁸ War or not, American leaders portrayed socialists as “traitors” to

¹¹⁴ Hank Gowdy, “Why I Enlisted,” *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 19, No. 5, September, 1917.

¹¹⁵ “Sergeant Gowdy, Salute Him, Fans,” *The Sporting News*, Vol. 63, No. 9, July 19, 1917

¹¹⁶ Christy Mathewson, “Gowdy the First to Go, Other Baseball Players Will Follow,” *Boston Globe*, (Boston, MA), June 10, 1917.

¹¹⁷ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 152.

¹¹⁸ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 163.

American principles. No person associated with the IWW could separate themselves from the organization's rhetoric.

The greatest threat the IWW posed to American mobilization was encouraging men to protest military conscription. The Selective Service Act placed immense pressure on men eligible for the draft because coerced patriotism was still a form of patriotism. Those who registered for the draft and were conscripted still demonstrated their Americanness. Men who opposed the draft, however, were labeled as "slackers," and risked being placed in a category similar to other groups government officials identified as adversaries. Slackers faced the possibility of being associated with, or being a member of, the IWW. As Frank Lowery discovered, the line between law-abiding citizen and agitator thinned drastically during the war.

Organized Baseball magnates realized that the obligations of war created two distinct categories of men: those who were patriots and those who were not. They did not want to give Americans any excuse to associate ballplayers in the latter category along with conscientious objectors, slackers, socialists, the IWW, and other wartime agitators. Club owners also worked to continue convincing the nation that their greatest contribution to the war effort, along with the players', was to keep playing baseball. They celebrated players like Gowdy and continued to raise money for war programs to maintain an appearance of patriotic service to the country. Teams organized benefit games in which some of the gate money supported local regiments. The New York Giants and Chicago Cubs agreed to play a benefit game for New York's 69th regiment on July 15, the same day that Congress passed the Espionage Act.¹¹⁹

By August of 1917, the New York Giants had a commanding ten-game lead in the National League. In the American League, the Chicago White Sox held a slim one-game

¹¹⁹ John B. Foster to August Herrmann, July 19, 1917, Box 49, Folder 6, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY

advantage over the Boston Red Sox. But Americans' attention increasingly focused overseas. The first American troops arrived in France, and the War Department announced plans to extend the age eligibility limits for the draft to eighteen and forty-five.¹²⁰ *The Sporting News* announced that they would provide free copies to soldiers in training camps in the United States and in Europe.¹²¹ Organized Baseball magnates received reassurance from the War Department that baseball would continue despite their move to broaden the draft. Adjutant General Henry McCain, a friend of Comiskey's, promised the owners that "No steps will be taken by the government that will injure teams fighting for the pennants in the major leagues." Baseball was too important to the nation's morale, McCain maintained, synching the War Department with the owners' argument.¹²²

"Baseball Will Not Halt for War," *The Sporting News* declared, and with the government's consent, the best-of-seven World Series between the Chicago White Sox and New York Giants commenced as scheduled on October 6 in Chicago.¹²³ Organized Baseball's National Commission called for club owners to meet before Game One of the series to discuss baseball's current state of wartime operation. The National Commission had served as Organized Baseball's governing body since the 1903 National Agreement brought the American League and National League together as one professional organization. The three-man commission consisted of the presidents of both leagues plus a team owner. Many considered American League president Ban Johnson to be the most powerful man in baseball at the time. His stubborn

¹²⁰ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 167.

¹²¹ "Fan in Trench and Camp Will Have his Dearest Wish," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 63, No. 21, August 2, 1917.

¹²² "Sox of White and Red Battle on Almost Even Terms Again: Big Time in Boston This Week, Baseball Will Not Halt for War," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 63, N. 21, August 2, 1917.

¹²³ "Baseball Will Not Halt for War," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, August 2, 1917.

and ambitious control of the Western League had transformed it from a fledging minor circuit in 1893, to a powerful organization that forced the National League form the sixteen-team professional league in 1903. So cold and humorless was Johnson that his associates often joked that he was weaned on an icicle.¹²⁴

National League president John K. Tener was the real-life incarnation of the American tale of the immigrant-orphan who achieved great success against all odds. Both of Tener's parents died when he was ten, shortly after they emigrating to the United States. His path out of poverty crossed the ball diamond. His lengthy six feet, four inches frame was ideal for a pitcher, and the Chicago White Stockings signed him to a contract in 1888. He had two good seasons with Chicago but fell apart after being traded to Pittsburgh where he lasted only one season. After he left baseball, Tener launched a political career, and was elected governor of Pennsylvania in 1910. Tener's political success coupled with his baseball past made him the ideal choice of National League owners when they sought a new president in 1913. Now Tener aimed to end rowdyism among players and managers in the National League. Following Ban Johnson's lead, he empowered umpires to levy fines and penalties for bad behavior.¹²⁵ He even instructed umpires to eject players who used foul language during games.¹²⁶

Garry Herrmann, the owner of the Cincinnati Reds, was the third member of the National Commission during the war. Born in Cincinnati in 1859, as a boy Herrmann acquired the nickname "Garibaldi," later shortened to "Garry," which stuck with him the rest of his life. He

¹²⁴ Joe Santry and Cindy Thomson, "Ban Johnson," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/dabf79f8>.

¹²⁵ Daniel Ginsburg, "John Tener," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/c90d4ea9>.

¹²⁶ Meeting of National Commission, October 6, 1917, Box 91, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

was a flashy dresser who like to wear pinky rings and was known to carry a supply of sausage with him wherever he went. The other owners disliked Herrmann as a businessman, but everyone appreciated the kindness and generosity he offered to friends and strangers alike.¹²⁷

The October 6 meeting aimed to prove Organized Baseball's commitment to victory. It explored options to send up-to-date results of the World Series to American bases overseas.¹²⁸ Herrmann extended free admission to all World Series games to soldiers training at bases near Chicago and New York.¹²⁹ The owners agreed to donate one percent of the profits from gate receipts to Clark Griffith's Bat and Ball Fund.¹³⁰ Icy Ban Johnson argued that Organized Baseball was already doing more than enough to support war programs financially and balked at the league's commitment to the Bat and Ball Fund. He wrote to Herrmann criticizing the decision to donate to Griffith's "absurd program."¹³¹ Why should the owners shell out? Were any of the players taking on the financial burden to support the fund?¹³² Johnson did not speak for all owners. Branch Rickey, president of the St. Louis Cardinals, saw the Bat and Ball Fund as no burden. Rickey was deeply religious and known as an accomplished speaker. One baseball

¹²⁷ John Saccoman, "August 'Garry' Herrmann," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/d72a4b39>.

¹²⁸ W.F. Wiley to August Herrmann, September 13, 1917, Box 91, Folder 10, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹²⁹ J.H. Bany to August Herrmann, September 26, 1917, Box 91, Folder 9, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³⁰ Clark Griffith to August Herrmann, November 1, 1917, Box 91, Folder 9, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³¹ Ban Johnson to August Herrmann, October 2, 1917, Box 91, Folder 12, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³² Ban Johnson to August Herrmann, October 1, 1917, Box 91, Folder 12, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

journalist described Rickey's oratorical skills as so accomplished that "reading of batting averages sound[ed] as impressive and as stirring as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address."¹³³

Rickey argued that the Bat and Ball Fund presented the owners with a splendid investment opportunity. "I think Mr. Griffith has done a magnificent piece of work for baseball," he stated, asserting that because of the fund, "we will have baseball in France and England" when the war ended.¹³⁴ Rickey's prognostication did not appear that far-fetched. Navy Fleet Chaplain George Stevenson assured John Tener that the Bat and Ball Fund would help American forces make baseball "popular on the other side."¹³⁵ Lieutenant P.L. Wilson thanked Tener for Griffith's baseball equipment, and added, "Our men will lose no opportunity for demonstrating the great American Game before our gallant allies, the French."¹³⁶ Admittedly, Rickey, and other owners who had dreams of forming leagues in France, would need to temper their expectations until after the war. Baseball magnates had more pressing issues to address with the conclusion of the 1917 season. The World Series ended on October 15 with Chicago defeating New York in six games. Players on the White Sox bought Liberty Bonds with their World Series bonus money. What better way to celebrate? The owners looked at the 1917 season as a successful demonstration of Organized Baseball's willingness to lend a helping hand to Uncle Sam.¹³⁷ With

¹³³ Andy McCue, "Branch Rickey," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/6d0ab8f3>.

¹³⁴ Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1917, Box 4, Folder 26, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³⁵ Chaplain Geo. E.T. Stevenson to John E. Tener, July 18, 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, National League Files: World War I and World War II, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³⁶ Lieutenant P.L. Wilson to John E. Tener, January 14, 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, National League Files: World War I and World War II, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹³⁷ Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 5.

the conflict's end uncertain, however, owners prepared for another baseball season in which the demands of war would continue to threaten their profits.

When National League owners met in December 1917, they debated how much they were willing to spend to maintain their performance of patriotism for another season. League president John Tener was there along with Reds owner Garry Herrmann and Cardinals' president, Branch Rickey. Representing the other teams at the meeting were William F. Baker, owner of the Philadelphia Phillies; Percy Haughton of the Boston Braves; Charles Weeghman, a majority owner of the Chicago Cubs; Harry Hempstead, owner of the New York Giants; Charles Ebbets of the Brooklyn Robins (who had worked his way up from a scorecard salesman to owner of the team); and Barney Dreyfuss, the outspoken owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates.¹³⁸ Dreyfuss had immigrated from Germany in 1885 and bought sole ownership of the Pirates in 1899 after he had helped his brothers' struggling bourbon business in Kentucky become highly profitable. His business acumen always had him seeking lucrative ventures that could grow his profits.¹³⁹

When the topic of the meeting turned to Liberty Bonds, conflict erupted. The club representatives could not agree whether appearing patriotic was more important than increasing league profits. Ebbets proposed that the league set aside \$50,000 to purchase bonds directly from the government. "No." Penny-pinching Dreyfuss objected, "We are not spending the money." He moved that the clubs purchase bonds from a broker he knew for three cents less than it would cost the league to buy from the government. William Baker worried about a possible public relations fiasco if word leaked that the league bought Liberty Bonds on the cheap to maximize their profits after the war. He reminded owners that buying from the government demonstrated

¹³⁸ John Saccoman, "Charlie Ebbets," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/12f35f52>.

¹³⁹ Sam Bernstein, "Barney Dreyfuss," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/29ceb9e0>.

the “spirit” of the league to help “in every way it can.” Dreyfuss remained steadfast and unabashedly explained that his suggestion was “not a patriotic move at all.” Revealingly, Rickey sided with Dreyfuss, arguing that buying bonds from a broker was an investment opportunity for the league. Dreyfuss and Rickey echoed the concerns of other baseball magnates who thought that the league was already strained enough financially through its current commitment to war charities. They argued that the owners should not turn down a chance to boost their profits if opportunity presented itself. Ultimately Dreyfuss’ motion to purchase discounted bonds failed to pass, yet the squabble revealed internal dissent in the league. Patriotism was fine – so long as it paid.

The war divided the league as never before. Some owners believed that they had to continue to support the war effort no matter the cost. Other owners argued that continuing down the path of one-hundred-percent Americanism was simply bad for business.¹⁴⁰ Regardless, the National League owners closed out 1917 by passing a resolution stating that “The young and virile manhood of the profession of baseball shall offer itself unreservedly and enthusiastically to the service of the great league of allied nations in this hour of its need.”¹⁴¹ If only! A few days after the pronouncement, the league received a blow to its patriotic pose. On December 23, 1917, a United States Deputy Marshal arrested the star pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds, Fred Toney, in Nashville, Tennessee for violating the Selective Service Act. The district attorney charged Toney with lying about his dependents when he registered for the draft in order to receive a more

¹⁴⁰ National League Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1917, “August Herrmann Collection,” Box 4, Folder 26, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁴¹ “National League Calls Upon Its Players to Join the Colors,” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, December 19, 1917.

favorable classification.¹⁴² But it all worked out. Eventually, a local restaurant owner posted Toney's \$2,500 bail. He returned to the Reds in April after his trial ended with a hung jury.¹⁴³

Even in light of Toney's arrest, Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss remained confident that America needed baseball more than baseball needed America. Certainly, he knew that a majority of the baseball writers backed Organized Baseball. A month before the start of the 1918 season, F.C. Lane told *Baseball Magazine* that "No, baseball does not have to explain at this time, why it should longer continue to exist in time of war. Its record is clean, its role approved." Lane listed the various ways that Organized Baseball was aiding in the war effort.

"First, contributions in one form and another to the Red Cross and other allied war charities. Second, acts of service for soldiers and sailors in this country. Third, similar acts of services for the men who have gone 'over there.' Fourth, contributions in direct aid of the military establishment such as special taxes, contributions to the liberty loan, etc."

Lane also reminded readers that seventy-six professional players had enlisted already, including T.L. Huston, part-owner of the New York Yankees.¹⁴⁴ Huston joined the army as a captain in the 16th Regiment of Engineers. The *Washington Post* declared that Huston was "one man in baseball who [was] doing more than his 'bit' for the game."¹⁴⁵

In March of 1918, the peace treaty signed between Russia and Germany heightened the stakes of war once again. Facing the possibility of a longer war with Germany after Russia's withdrawal, the War Department proposed to generate revenue by taxing all entertainment-

¹⁴² "Fred Toney of Reds Arrested on Charge of Dodging Draft," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), December 24, 1917.

¹⁴³ "Big Fred Toney at Last Leaves to Join Reds: Star Boxman Will Have Time Between Trials to Aid Matty's Outfit," (Nashville, TN), *Nashville Tennessean*, April 23, 1918.

¹⁴⁴ F.C. Lane, "Baseball's Bit in the World War," *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 2, March 1918.

¹⁴⁵ "Capt. Huston a Credit to National Pastime," (Washington, D.C.), *Washington Post*, August 12, 1917.

related businesses. Baseball magnates who understood their voluntary contributions as a demonstration of baseball's commitment to Uncle Sam believed that the new "war tax" represented government overreach. The owners met to discuss how to administer the ten-percent levy on ticket sales. Dreyfuss argued that the fans should carry the burden of the tax. "Sooner or later, he moaned, "base ball will be at a standstill if nobody can make any money. I frankly confess that I want to make money." He encouraged the league to raise the price of tickets: "Base ball today furnishes better amusement at a less price than any other amusement."¹⁴⁶ He also suggested that if the fans offset the cost of the tax, it relieved both parties of the annoyance of handling pennies at the gate.¹⁴⁷ After consulting with American League owners, the National Commission approved raising ticket prices for the 1918 season. By handing the fans the burden of the war tax, the conflict of values among club owners appeared to be closing. Ultimately, profits counted more than acts of patriotism.

But there was one owner unable to voice his opinion in the decision on the war tax. T.L. Huston, part owner of the New York Yankees, was "over there" fighting for America. Huston wrote a column for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* from his base in France that unleashed a scathing indictment on Organized Baseball. He was not impressed that only twenty-nine percent of eligible major league players were in active service by the spring of 1918.¹⁴⁸ He lectured the players on their "lack of patriotism" that he called "a disgrace." He saved most of his ire for the owners, "Not a person connected with the business end of baseball has volunteered," he wondered. "Ye gods, what a mortifying and shameful spectacle!" Huston warned that "baseball

¹⁴⁶ Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1918, Box 4, Folder 29, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁴⁷ "Have the Change Ready," *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 7, April 25, 1918.

¹⁴⁸ Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 82.

must watch closer the signs of the times,” explaining that the sport was “strangely out of step with national events. Everybody but the men managing baseball sees the immediate serious situation to which America is exposed,” he scolded. “If they don’t wake up from their stupor and put the national game in its rightful place in the front ranks of all patriotic movements, events combined with public opinion will force them out and put others more alert in their places.” Huston’s words laid bare the owners’ greed and disregard for their civic duty.

Huston was the first to call out baseball magnates for failing to do all in their power to support the war effort. “Baseball wants to do its duty by the nation, he decried, “and at the same time it naturally desires to avoid the sacrifice of its entire invested rights and property.”¹⁴⁹ Huston warned the owners that Organized Baseball risked losing fans because of their greed and vanity, which kept ballplayers from enlisting.¹⁵⁰ The owners did not seem bothered by the glaring contradiction that Huston exposed. Stories about players who had already enlisted inadvertently bolstered Huston’s argument. Tener claimed that baseball hero turned American hero Hank Gowdy had not volunteered from a sense of duty. Instead, he fibbed he had enlisted “eagerly, gladly, [and] anxious to do a man’s full part toward the winning of liberty for a world torn by the red strife of war.”¹⁵¹ Tener’s tone placed Gowdy within the larger global struggle for freedoms that imperial regimes and Bolshevik uprisings denied. Tener aligned with War Department propaganda that emphasized the American effort in the war as a battle to preserve liberty for the world. An April 4 headline in *The Sporting News* read, “Hank Gowdy Should Be Terror to Huns: Boston Catcher Had Deadly Arm Pegging Runners; Led All Sharpshooters in

¹⁴⁹ “‘Shame!’ Cries Capt. Huston To Baseball Men of U.S.,” (Baltimore, MD), *Baltimore Sun*, March 25, 1918.

¹⁵⁰ T.L. Huston, “Huston Calls on Baseball to do Share: American Leaguer in France, Scores Present Policy,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 24, 1918.

¹⁵¹ John K. Tener, “Hank Gowdy, the Man Who Blazed the Trail,” *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 2, March 1918.

League When It Came to Percentage Would-Be Stealers Stopped.”¹⁵² The analogous use of sport and military jargon reinforced the belief that baseball helped provide men with skills transferable to war, and that reinforced them as the most ideal men to aid in the global struggle to preserve liberty. Another five hundred Gowdys and victory would be at hand.

But baseball could hardly spare such men. The owners maintained that Organized Baseball’s most valuable contribution to the war was to continue playing games. They planned to play out the entire 1918 schedule. On May 23, the Boston Red Sox and New York Giants sat atop the standings of their respective leagues to no one’s surprise. The news of the day, however, focused on the announcement made by Provost Marshal General Enoch Crowder. He operated as the chief law enforcement officer of the military and had been appointed as the Selective Service Administrator by Secretary of War Newton Baker. That day Crowder announced the “Work or Fight” order, mandating that all able-bodied men in “non-essential work” between the ages of twenty-one and thirty had until July 1 to find civilian employment in a war industry or register for the draft. Crowder’s order responded to General John Pershing’s demand that the War Department supply more troops for his American Expeditionary Forces. The “Work or Fight” order required local draft boards to reclassify the occupations of all registrants so that men in “nonessential work” would be placed into Class I, “eligible and liable for military service.” This also required another round of registration.¹⁵³

Crowder’s order sent Organized Baseball magnates scrambling to find out whether baseball players fell within the government’s definition of “nonessential work.” The day after

¹⁵² “Hank Gowdy Should Be Terror to Huns: Boston Catcher Had Deadly Arm Pegging Runners; Led All Sharpshooters in League When It Came to Percentage Would-Be Stealers Stopped,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 4, April 4, 1918.

¹⁵³ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 166.

Crowder's announcement, Barney Dreyfuss fired off a letter to Garry Herrmann demanding that the National Commission ask the Provost Marshal General for clarification on the order.¹⁵⁴ On May 27, Ohio Representative Nicholas Longworth, a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, replied to Herrmann: "The Provost Marshal General's office declines now to express any opinion as to how men in any specific employment will be affected."¹⁵⁵ According to Secretary of War Baker, the order intended "to strengthen the military forces of the country, and not to control the labor situation."¹⁵⁶ Neither Longworth's nor Baker's comments provided the reassurance the owners desired.¹⁵⁷

The Sporting News ran two front-page stories: one conveyed the confusion within Organized Baseball, and the other framed the "Work or Fight" order as a brash decision made by a few ill-informed members of the War Department. "Baseball Asks Only Square Deal Under Crowder Order," the first headline stated "Ready As Ever to do Its Bit." It saw the "Work or Fight" order as "startling," and quoted American League President Ban Johnson as hopeful that the government would modify the order. Were they trying to "wipe out baseball overnight?" The second article panned "Work or Fight" sharply: "Crowder Order Not a Hit with Anybody." It suggested that Crowder did not "consult the real big men in Washington," noting that President Wilson had been an "enthusiastic spectator" at a ballgame he attended recently in Washington. Baseball had to continue or the government would lose out on war-tax revenue and war-related

¹⁵⁴ Barney Dreyfuss to August Herrmann, May 24, 1918, Box 113, Folder 1, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁵⁵ Nicholas Longworth to August Herrmann, May 27, 1918, Box 113, Folder 1, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁵⁶ J.V. Fitzgerald, "Baseball Gets a Lease of Life Until Sept. 1, Under Modification Verdict: Work or Fight Order Not Operative Until Then, Baker Decides," (Washington, D.C.), *Washington Post*, July 27, 1918.

¹⁵⁷ "Crowder Passes Over Baseball: Fails to Mention Status of Players in Announcement," (Nashville, TN), *Nashville Tennessean and Nashville American*, June 22, 1918.

charities would also suffer without it.¹⁵⁸ While they waited for official word from the War Department, Organized Baseball magnates pressed their case that ballplayers should be exempted as “entertainers” since the order classified them as essential.¹⁵⁹

The same month that Crowder announced, “Work or Fight,” one of the game’s greatest players, “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, declared that he was leaving the White Sox to accept a job at Bethlehem Steel Corporation. That sounded patriotic enough, but Secretary-Treasurer of the National League, John A. Heydler, identified Jackson’s decision as part of a larger problem that threatened Organized Baseball. He alerted club presidents that proprietors of war industries were taking advantage of Crowder’s order by poaching professional ballplayers. Several of the firms that supplied munitions and equipment for the war also had baseball teams. Now they were exploiting the “Work or Fight” order to recruit ballplayers to their teams. Heydler waved copies of letters sent to players from owners of war industries claiming that the government planned to shut down baseball and promising that players who did not want to enter the service could find refuge as employees at their facilities.¹⁶⁰ The owners worried that players would begin abandoning their teams for the safety of a war job. This would add another black mark to the game’s poor performance of patriotism. Already fretting over the sport’s financial health if forced to shut down, baseball magnates fumed at the idea that men already profiting from the war were exacerbating players’ fears through a misinformation campaign.

¹⁵⁸ “Baseball Asks Only Square Deal Under Crowder Order, Ready As Ever to do Its Bit,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 12, May 30, 1918.

¹⁵⁹ “Crowder Order Not a Hit with Anybody: Baseball Joins Other Businesses in Raising Objections,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 12, May 30, 1918.

¹⁶⁰ John A. Heydler to All Club Presidents, June 20, 1918, Box 113, Folder 1, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Jackson's announcement resulted in more negative press for Organized Baseball. Even *The Sporting News*, a periodical that operated as baseball propaganda, chastised him by calling his pursuit of a war job a "retreat" to a shipyard. The tone of the piece called Jackson's patriotism into question, "Either the fighting blood of the Jacksons is not as red as it used to be in the days of Old Stonewall and Old Hickory, or 'General Joe' of the Chicago White Sox concluded there were enough of his family in the war already." He had four brothers in the service and claimed his wife as a dependent.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, Jackson could not separate himself from the warrior-athlete ideal built up around ballplayers. His choice revealed that, despite the claims that baseball prepared men for war, not all of them wanted to fight. Baseball risked losing its privileged position as a leading cultural institution in America if the league appeared to be filled with more Jacksons than Gowdys. Were players, then, no more than entertainers?

Despite the "Work or Fight" order, Branch Rickey wrote to Herrmann to express confidence about baseball's future. "It seems impossible to me that the Government will do anything that might tend to disturb our business this year."¹⁶² Still, baseball prepared for the worst. Herrmann requested that clubs submit lists of players who would be affected by Crowder's order, in case he felt obliged to file an official protest with the War Department.¹⁶³ The lists were devastating. If the government ruled baseball players to be "nonessential," Clark Griffith informed Herrmann that the Washington Senators would lose all but three players from

¹⁶¹ "Retreats to a Ship Yard: Outfielder Joe Jackson," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 10, May 16, 1918.

¹⁶² Branch Rickey to August Herrmann, June 25, 1918, Box 113, Folder 1, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁶³ Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1918, Box 4, Folder 30, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY

their roster.¹⁶⁴ From a purely business perspective, Griffith provided Organized Baseball with a strong case for a War Department exemption. But baseball magnates had spent decades building a case that baseball was far more than a business. They argued that the sport served a process of Americanizing the nation and a means to inculcate masculine traits. The order that threatened to deplete baseball's labor pool also threatened to expose the paradox that turned the sport into a multi-million-dollar industry. If America demanded skilled soldiers, and athleticism was an indicator of the type of man capable of fulfilling the expectations of soldiering, then professional baseball players would be among the best suited to fight for their country.

Baseball games continued, despite the "Work of Fight" order, as club owners waited for official word from the War Department. While they waited, vigilante groups like the American Protective League (APL) took actions that further exposed Organized Baseball's contradiction. The APL had formed in 1917 around a group of Chicago businessmen too old or exempt from the draft who believed it was their civic duty to protect America. Spreading across the upper the Midwest and east coast, the APL feared that the war effort could be sabotaged by internal threats. The Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation endowed them to act as an extension of the state to spy on perceived adversaries and enforce compliance with the "Work or Fight" order. The APL manual took that endorsement a step further, claiming that the league served as an "important auxiliary and reserve force for the Bureau of Investigation." Members of the APL included "leading men in various localities who have volunteered their services for the purpose of being on the lookout for and reporting to this Department information of value to the Government, and for the further purpose of endeavoring to secure information regarding any

¹⁶⁴ Clark Griffith to August Herrmann, June 10, 1918, Box 113, Folder 1, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

matters about which it may be requested to make inquiry.”¹⁶⁵ With no real government oversight, members of the APL were bullies with badges.

The APL’s great innovation was to conduct “slacker raids,” targeting bars, pool halls, and movie theaters to round up men who were in violation of the “Work or Fight” order.¹⁶⁶ The Chicago APL orchestrated a massive raid on July 11. One of their North-Side targets was Weeghman Park during game one of a double-header between the Chicago Cubs and Boston Braves. Once the APL swarmed into the stadium, agents locked the gates to prevent fans from leaving and others made their way to the press box. One took control of the PA system announcing that they planned to arrest any man unable to show proof of his government-issued registration card. Before Phil Douglas threw the final pitch to secure a Cubs victory, the APL had five hundred “slackers” in custody.¹⁶⁷

On that day in 1918, the APL arrested men to force them to recognize their manly duty while neglecting to target the most masculine men in the stadium: the ballplayers. Surely club owners were relieved given the growing tension between Organized Baseball and the government. But how much longer would the sport continue normal operations as the tensions of war intensified? Would baseball magnates be able to convince the War Department to list baseball as an “essential occupation?” John Tener presented a case he hoped would persuade government officials. He asserted that the sport provided “moral and spiritual production.” When pressed to elaborate what he meant, Tener explained, “What baseball produces is intangible

¹⁶⁵ American Protective League, *American Protective League: Organized under the Direction of the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Investigation*, (Washington, D.C.: The League, 1918), 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 7.

¹⁶⁷ "Roundup at Ball Park.: 500 Taken By Authorities in Chicago Hunt For Slackers," (New York, NY), *New York Times* July 12, 1918.

[and] I do not think it can be called nonessential or nonproductive.”¹⁶⁸ A few days later, *The Sporting News* urged the government to use “common sense.” Massive attendance on the Fourth of July proved that patriotic Americans loved baseball. After all, as Tener might have argued, Americans needed their “spiritual production” that nurtured their patriotism.¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, for Organized Baseball, the War Department did not buy their argument. On July 19, Secretary of War Newton Baker ruled that baseball players were not “entertainers,” and therefore were “nonessential.” They would need to comply with the “Work or Fight” order.

Secretary Baker’s announcement insisted that the men who played baseball professionally had to demonstrate their loyalty to Uncle Sam.¹⁷⁰ “We may trust to *American manhood* to come forward and *identify itself*,” declared a government-issued brochure promoting the war.¹⁷¹ In support of his ruling, Baker invoked the athlete-warrior ideal: “Baseball players are men of unusual physical ability, dexterity and alertness, [making] them productive in some capacity highly useful to the nation.”¹⁷² That decision also defined which professions, and the men employed in them, were “masculine” enough to provide the manpower for war. The *Dramatic Mirror*, a New York-based theater newsletter that new something about entertainment, played up the different image of the masculine, war-ready ballplayer. “The majority [of actors] cannot compare in physical qualities with ballplayers.”¹⁷³ And even if they had been entertainers,

¹⁶⁸ “Tener Seeks Light on Draft Rulings: Believes Hornsby Case May Solve Riddles Now Bothering Baseball Men,” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, July 8, 1918.

¹⁶⁹ “Would Uncle Sam Deny All These Fans Their Baseball? Proof That Game is Wanted,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 18, July 11, 1918.

¹⁷⁰ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 19.

¹⁷¹ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 27.

¹⁷² “Ball Players Must Fight; Complete Text of Ruling,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1918.

¹⁷³ “Baseball Players, Actors, and Their Part in the War,” (Hartford, CT), *Hartford Courant*, July 29, 1918.

by what measure did that make hundreds of ballplayers “essential” workers? Would it not “be a much more unfortunate thing to preserve even so wholesome an amusement by making an exception in favor of baseball players, “Baker asked, “which is denied to great classes of persons in the United States whose occupation have been held similarly non-essential?”¹⁷⁴ The answer seemed obvious.

Organized Baseball’s leadership rushed to challenge Baker’s decision. John Tener telegraphed President Wilson’s personal secretary, J.P. Tumulty, claiming that the order would ruin baseball. The president must intervene.¹⁷⁵ John Heydler hoped Secretary Baker would suspend the order outright.¹⁷⁶ The National Commission appealed for postponement until the close of the “championship season,” pushing back baseball’s compliance to mid-October.¹⁷⁷ The government denied their appeal. In eager, the Commission called for an emergency meeting on July 24.

Percy Haughton of the Boston Braves and William Baker of the Philadelphia Phillies were the only owners to recommend that baseball shut down. They feared that the game’s image would suffer should they defy the order. Charles Ebbets, Garry Herrmann, Barney Dreyfuss, Branch Rickey, and Harry Hempstead took the other side. Ebbets suggested that Organized Baseball could have things both ways if they found replacement players for those lost to the

¹⁷⁴“Secretary Baker’s Sympathetic Words,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 21, August 1, 1918.

¹⁷⁵ John K. Tener to J.P. Tumulty, June 28, 1918, Work or Fight Collection, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁷⁶ John Heydler to John K. Tener, July 20, 1918, Work or Fight Collection, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁷⁷ Meeting of Board of Director of National League Clubs, July 23, 1918, Box 4, Folder 30, National League Meeting Minutes, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

“Work or Fight” order. Rickey recommended that baseball continue until club owners had enough time to ascertain the public mood, and then react accordingly. Dreyfuss was confident that fans would side with Organized Baseball and implored owners to continue operations.¹⁷⁸ Three days after the meeting, Secretary Baker pushed back the “Work or Fight” order for baseball players until September 1, 1918. Baseball needed more time than other industries, he said, to make the financial and legal adjustments to his order.¹⁷⁹ That concession showed that Baker would cooperate with baseball as a business. Yet did not budge on the symbolic justification for ruling baseball players as “nonessential.” That compromise should have been baseball’s salvation as a patriotic, manly, American sport. But it was not.

First, there were the complexities of law and money to address. One of the major legal hurdles worrying club owners was how to handle player contracts. If the government forced the season to end early, owners did not want to pay players for a full season. Club owners had retained nearly unlimited power in contract negotiations with the players dating back to 1879 thanks to the league’s adoption of the “reserve clause.” That clause allowed owners to reserve the services of players instead of allowing them to enter an open market. This helped owners save money and control player salaries.¹⁸⁰ The owners did not want to concede any negotiating power to the players, and now by paying them to not play, they risked creating that precedent. They also did not want players filing lawsuits for breach of contract. After consulting with the league’s lawyers, Herrmann informed club owners that player contracts would be considered

¹⁷⁸ Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, July 24, 1918, Box 4, Folder 30, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown.

¹⁷⁹ J.V. Fitzgerald, “Baseball Gets a Lease of Life Until Sept. 1, Under Modification Verdict: Work or Fight Order Not Operative Until Then, Baker Decides,” (Washington, D.C.), *Washington Post*, July 27, 1918.

¹⁸⁰ Burke, *Never Just a Game*, 62-63.

“illegal” once the “Work or Fight” order took effect. The United States government had “first call upon [player] services,” he explained, which would terminate their contractual obligations with their respective clubs.¹⁸¹ Abrogating contract rights, it turned out, was the path of patriotism, and profits too.

While club owners fretted over the legal and financial ramifications of a work stoppage, the players grappled with the consequences of their choice either to “work” or “fight.” No longer could ballplayers hide behind the patriotic actions of those who had already enlisted. Baker’s announcement that all ballplayers had to be in compliance with the “Work or Fight” order by September 1 amplified the legal and social repercussions in each player’s decision. Whoever did not take the more patriotic route risked losing his quasi-heroic stature.¹⁸² Conscription forced American men to consider how the government, and the nation, would define them.¹⁸³ Cleveland Indians outfielder Tris Speaker filed paperwork with the Navy aviation forces and planned to enroll in the service at the conclusion of the season. He believed that the Navy offered the best opportunity for action.¹⁸⁴ Likewise, Ty Cobb announced his plan to join the army when the season ended. Cobb prided himself on his fearless demeanor and manly bravado. He enlisted in the Chemical War Service.¹⁸⁵

But, for every Cobb, Speaker, and Gowdy, there were players like “Shoeless” Joe. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* mocked Jackson’s decision to evade conscription when he had left the

¹⁸¹ August Herrmann to All National League Club Owners, August 13, 1918, “Work or Fight Collection,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁸² Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ “Speaker to Quit Baseball at Season’s End and Become an Aviator in Naval Service,” (Washington, D.C.) *Washington Post*, July 18, 1918.

¹⁸⁵ “Ty Cobb Gets Commission,” *New York Times*, (New York, NY), August 31, 1918.

White Sox to play baseball for Beth Steel. Despite Jackson's "unusual physical development," his "special gifts" would be wasted "outside the firing line," the paper declared.¹⁸⁶ Jackson should be batting against the Kaiser himself. Seven of Jackson's White Sox teammates also eluded conscription. Eddie Cicotte and Chick Gandil filed for and received exemptions. "Lefty" Williams, "Happy" Felsch, Swede Risberg, and Buck Weaver all sought employment in war-related industries. Fred McMullin claimed that he was going to San Pedro, California to join the Navy, but he ended up playing baseball at a shipping yard instead.¹⁸⁷

The "Work or Fight" order created an atmosphere of coercive volunteerism for any man who met the criteria because those who willingly joined the service were celebrated as "true patriots," while those conscripted, and those who took a war job were deemed something less. Hartford native and artillery sergeant Raymond E. Landmesser believed that "every male person physically fit should serve his country in time of war."¹⁸⁸ A view probably shared by most Americans. Of the 258 ballplayers who fell within the order, only ninety-eight ended up in the military and almost always stationed far from the front.¹⁸⁹ In response to the Organized Baseball's apparent lack of patriotic spirit, *Star and Stripes*, the official newsletter of the American Armed Forces, dropped its coverage of professional baseball from its sports page.¹⁹⁰ Baseball was no longer a sanctioned distraction for the troops. By the fall of 1918, many viewed

¹⁸⁶ "The Case of Joe Jackson," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 6, 1918.

¹⁸⁷ For more details on each player's status during the war, see the SABR Biography Project. www.sabr.org.

¹⁸⁸ Edward A. Gutiérrez, *Doughboys on the Great War: How American Soldiers Viewed Their Military Service*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2014), 57.

¹⁸⁹ Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 109.

¹⁹⁰ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 21.

the pastime as a trivial presence in American life. The persistence by some owners to play baseball beyond the September 1 deadline further ruined the sport's social capital.

The National Commission had agreed that baseball's regular season would stop by September 1, but American League president Ban Johnson wanted the league to play a World Series. Baker's order, he claimed, implied that the league could still play the postseason series. National League president John Tener opposed that move. The Chicago Cubs were on pace to represent the National League in the 1918 World Series, and Cubs owner Charles Weeghman sided with Johnson. He believed that Tener, his own league president, had betrayed his duties by advocating to end the season without a World Series.¹⁹¹ The rest of the National League owners favored playing a World Series and sent Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss to meet with the owners of the American League to see if they agreed.¹⁹²

In his weekly column, baseball writer Irving Ellis "Sy" Sanborn berated the owners for their arrogance. He acknowledged that some in baseball "have accepted the inevitable gracefully and with a purpose to serve the country," but suggested that baseball's future in American life was in doubt:

"The rest have displayed a desire to put self-interest ahead of the nation's ultimate triumph that has done professional baseball no good. Instead of adopting that line of action the club owners decided to go before the administration seeking special favors and succeeded in obtaining a commutation of their sentence to work or fight until Sept. 1. That in itself did not look dignified, nor did it increase the public's respect for professional baseball. The proof thereof was found in the great decrease in the attendance following the reprieve."¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ "Robbins Says Moguls Have Led Baseball into the Ditch: He Pans 'Em Hard for Game's Woes," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 65, No. 21, August 1, 1918.

¹⁹² Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, August 2, 1918, Box 4, Folder 30, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁹³ I.E. Sanborn, "Self Interest Reacting on Club Moguls: Fans Drift Away as Money Intrudes Over Loyalty," Unidentified Periodical, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

The *Chicago Tribune* depicted the owners as “defying” the Secretary of War – which infuriated Organized Baseball. Garry Herrmann took it upon himself to defend the league’s decision. He sent a letter to the *Tribune* claiming that Baker was “anxious to see the game continued.”¹⁹⁴ Herrmann released a public statement indicating that any allegations that Organized Baseball had tried to repeal the “Work or Fight” order was “absolutely erroneous.” “The only request submitted in regard to the Order,” he insisted, “was that before it became effective, a reasonable time be given to put it into effect and a course of procedure be adopted for so doing.” The final games of the season would be played on September 2, he explained, since it was Labor Day. “Immediately thereafter,” he assured, “the players may forthwith enter essential employment.”¹⁹⁵

Baseball magnates stuck to the story Herrmann concocted, that they had never challenged the government order and received permission to play the World Series. Ban Johnson instructed players on the two World Series teams, the Chicago Cubs and Boston Red Sox, to ask their local draft boards for an extension on the “Work or Fight” order until September 15.¹⁹⁶ Bob Quinn, owner of the St. Louis Browns, wrote to Herrmann on August 13, expressing concern about the league’s decision to play the World Series. But Quinn did not seem as concerned with the growing perception that baseball lacked a patriotic spirit. He worried that the league could lose money. According to Quinn’s lawyer, in the event fans boycotted the Series, or attendance

¹⁹⁴ August Herrman to Harvey T. Woodruff, August 5, 1918, “Work or Fight Collection,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁹⁵ August Herrmann to All NL Club Owners, August 13, 1918, “Work or Fight Collection,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁹⁶ Walter Graighead to August Herrmann, August 12, 1918, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

suffered, the league would need to step in and pay the players.¹⁹⁷ War was war and business was business.

Herrmann went on damage control again releasing another statement regarding the World Series. He reminded fans that “major league ball players who are in a deferred classification prefer to enter the service rather than to secure essential employment.” He also asserted that since Secretary Baker did not specifically mention the World Series in his decision, he had endorsed the league to play the series after the conclusion of the shortened regular season. “Playing the Series,” Herrmann claimed, “[was] to prevent an interruption in America’s Leading Sport Fixture, the result of which in 1917 was of intense interest, not alone throughout the United States, but in France and other countries where our troops were located.” Herrmann also instructed the clubs to close out their seasons with a “big jollification” and ceremonies that would show “their love for the game and their loyalty to the country and their obedience to the “Work or Fight” order. Club owners hoped that an ostentatious celebration would be enough to convince the nation that their patriotism was genuine. But no matter how high they flew the American flag; it would not distract attention away from baseball’s defiance to wartime demands.¹⁹⁸

Although, publicly, Herrmann appeared confident that the owners had the War Department’s endorsement to play the World Series, privately he wanted reassurance. Profits or patriotism? Herrmann wrote to William Zimmerman, the Chairman of the Selective Service Board of Ohio, to whether Baker would support baseball’s decision to play the World Series.

¹⁹⁷ Bob Quinn to August Herrmann, August 13, 1918, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

¹⁹⁸ August Herrmann to All NL Club Owners, August 13, 1918, “Work or Fight Collection,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Zimmerman's answer did not offer comfort. Most likely, he said, Baker did not endorse the league to play a postseason series after September 1.¹⁹⁹ As pressure mounted over Organized Baseball's gamble that Baker authorized playing the World Series, National League president John Tener abruptly resigned on August 18.²⁰⁰ He disliked how the league had handled the "Work or Fight" order, and his letter suggested that playing a World Series was "morally wrong." Tener's resignation was the result of more than just the league's reluctance to end the season outright to comply with Baker's edict. Tener no longer wanted to be associated with the club owners' hypocrisy and self-serving efforts to support the war.²⁰¹ Organized Baseball appeared to be crumbling from the inside.

Despite this blowback, the league set September 4 as the beginning of the 1918 World Series. Heavy rain in Chicago postponed the first game to September 5, but that development was secondary to another breaking story that affected professional baseball. News out of Fort Worth, Texas reported that a young minor league pitcher affiliated with the Pittsburgh Pirates, Marcus Milligan, had died in a plane crash while performing a training exercise. Herrmann seized the moment as a chance to revive baseball's image, "His death which places the first golden star in the National League's service flag proves the patriotism of the professional ball players."²⁰² Whether or not Herrmann was genuinely saddened by Milligan's death was not as

¹⁹⁹ William Zimmerman to August Herrmann, August 17, 1918, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁰⁰ Meeting of the Board Members of NL Clubs, National League Meeting Minutes, August 10, 1918, Box 4, Folder 30, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁰¹ Harry Schummacher, *Tener's Resignation Only Way out of Mean Position*, Unidentified Periodical, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁰² Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 140.

important as the relief the news brought to the owners. They could divert attention away from the league's feud with the War Department and welcome sympathy for baseball's loss.

Organized Baseball magnates needed a well-attended, and exciting World Series to convince government officials, and themselves, that the fight was worth the effort. The Series provided plenty of drama. Every game but one was decided by two runs or less, and it took six games to determine a winner. And yet, the most memorable events from the series occurred during the seventh inning stretch of Game One. A local military band, invited to play music between innings, started up "The Star-Spangled Banner." Upon hearing the anthem, Boston's rookie third baseman, Fred Thomas, who was on a two-week leave from the Navy to play in the series, turned to salute the flag. The sight of a ballplayer standing at attention inspired the crowd to begin singing along, and it ended with thundering applause. That impromptu display of patriotism at a baseball game at a time the nation was at war convinced club owners to play "The Star-Spangled Banner" during season openers and at World Series games beginning in 1919.²⁰³

Boston defeated the Cubs to claim the championship, and the contentious 1918 baseball season officially came to an end on September 11. Still, ticket sales fell short of previous years. Ticket brokers in Boston claimed that no one wanted tickets at any price. Comiskey blamed the lackluster attendance on the fact that men who normally would have been at the games were already serving their country. His defense rang hollow with the nation that was fully invested in a world war. The owners got their World Series, but at what cost? ²⁰⁴

A few days after the series ended, the *Chicago Tribune* published an op-ed, "Baseball Slackers," which handed down a damning indictment. Too many baseball players had dodged

²⁰³ Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches*, 141.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 141.

service. Did professional baseball serve any real purpose for America? The *Tribune* pointed directly at the contradiction within Organized Baseball to justify its attack. “[Baseball players] are the physical top of the country,” it noted. “They have special aptitude for the very work which war requires. They are supposed to be on their toes every minute, clean muscularly, full of pep-splendid material for infantry, bombers, machine gun crews, etc.” Why were they not in the trenches? The façade was shattered, “When the men who reach the greatest prominence in the game reveal themselves as timid, shirking, self-protective, and slacking, the notion that the sport has any tonic value to the nation gets a setback.”²⁰⁵ Baseball magnates benefited from the belief that the game helped to inculcate patriotic and masculine traits that prepared boys to assume roles as prominent members of society. Various government organizations at local, state, and even national levels embraced baseball as a part of their programs because of the perception that the sport was intrinsically American, and therefore served as a process of Americanization. The *Tribune* directly challenged the legitimacy of all of those claims.

Ballplayers’ response to military conscription actually aligned with the national response. Few wanted to fight that war, especially in 1918. Yet, their depiction as extraordinary and remarkably skilled for war created expectations for ballplayers that exceeded those of average Americans. How many men drafted into service or arrested by the APL began harboring resentment against Organized Baseball? Perhaps ballplayers were not that masculine after all. The magnates of professional baseball had to face the consequences of public cynicism when their response to the war, combined with that of the players, did not meet the demands that were expected of them.²⁰⁶ By the war’s end, Organized Baseball’s hesitation, and often outright

²⁰⁵ “Baseball Slackers,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), September 17, 1918.

²⁰⁶ Southern draft boards reported that nearly eighty percent of eligible men filed for exemptions during the first registration cycle in 1917. For more on military conscription during the First World War, see Christopher

resistance, to comply with the War Department's "Work or Fight" order tarnished its reputation as the "American Pastime."

Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Gerald E. Shenk, *"Work or Fight!": Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

CHAPTER 4. BASEBALL'S BREAKING POINT

When news of the November 11 armistice ending the World War reached the shores of the United States, celebrations erupted everywhere. Americans reveled in the role they had played to secure Allied victory, and they welcomed a return to peace. With the war machine winding down, businesses transitioned back to pre-war operations and Americans became reacquainted with “normalcy.” The euphoria that had followed the armistice was short-lived as the country battled the global influenza epidemic claiming tens of thousands of lives in America. On December 20, Organized Baseball learned of the death of veteran umpire Francis “Silk” O’Loughlin. During their December meeting, the National Commission had to consider the impact of the virus in addition to the lingering effects of the public relations fiasco they created in 1918. Would Organized Baseball survive?

Club owners hoped that Americans would also embrace a return of the National Pastime. The success of professional baseball relied on hiding its unabashed business side from the fans. Decades of propaganda had succeeded at convincing Americans that baseball kept them connected to the nation’s past. They understood the sport as a “rite of passage” and part of a process of Americanization. Baseball was the timeless game that constructed a common identity that unified the population with previous generations. The sound of the crack of the bat, the sight of dirt-stained pants, and the smell of popcorn and hotdogs at the concessions were all part of an experience that was uniquely American. Yet, Organized Baseball’s response to the war had disrupted the nostalgic grip that the game held on American culture. In the winter of 1918, owners prepared for the worst as the future of professional baseball was uncertain.

On January 22, 1919, Abraham G. Mills, the former president of the National League, wrote to the current NL president, John Heydler, wishing him luck in the upcoming season.

Heydler's rise in Organized Baseball had begun in the 1890s when he worked as an umpire for the National League. The National Commission made him the NL secretary-treasurer in 1903, and he took over as president of the league after John Tener's abrupt resignation in 1918. Heydler had spent most of his adult life working in professional baseball, and the game's uncertain future was weighing on the minds of current and former magnates.²⁰⁷ In a postscript to his letter Mills shared a story about a baseball team he formed with his regiment during the Civil War. He recalled a game they had played on Hilton Head island in South Carolina on Christmas Day, 1862.²⁰⁸ Mills did not offer any other information or context about the game, which placed Heydler in a position to wonder why Mills shared the story.

Mills' military career was no secret. He had earned the nickname "Colonel" even though he was a second lieutenant when he was honorably discharged from the army in 1865.²⁰⁹ Did Mills want to reassure Heydler that despite the ugliness of 1918, a veteran of war still had faith in baseball? Was he attempting to send a subtle warning about baseball's apparent lack of patriotism by reminding Heydler of his service? Certainly, the game's status remained in limbo. Heydler, and the rest of Organized Baseball's leadership, were not sure what would happen when stadium gates opened to fans in 1919. Would they come back and demonstrate that they still believed that baseball was something more than a game to America? Seemingly the speed and level at which baseball could recover relied on the fans' wallets and the media's words.

Baseball as a business faced an uncertain future, but baseball as a game that anyone could play remained in a better position. Letters from soldiers who fought in the war revealed that

²⁰⁷ Stephen V. Rice, "John Heydler," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/8d5071ae>.

²⁰⁸ A.G. Mills to John Heydler, January 22, 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, A.G. Mills Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁰⁹ James Mallinson, "A.G. Mills," SABR Biography Project, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/abccef1b>.

baseball had played a vital role in their shared experiences. One soldier stationed in France wrote to his father about a baseball game played between two regiments. The game had grown so raucous, he claimed, that the cheers drowned out the sound of guns. “You would have thought you were at Fenway Park,” the soldier quipped; baseball was more exciting than war.²¹⁰ So, too, Private Arthur N. Fauble explained that his regiment used baseball as a way to calm their fears during enemy bombardment. “When the German shells burst about us the fellows call out ‘strike one’ or ‘ball one,’ and when a shell lands uncomfortably close, they shout, ‘fair ball!’”²¹¹ Hyperbole or not, American soldiers shared baseball as the escape they needed to cope with war. Whether the setting was a southern state during the 1860s, or a trench dug along the French countryside in 1918, baseball helped American soldiers across all generations retain their identity as Americans. Baseball magnates hoped that when the soldiers returned home, they would reignite in all Americans that deep connection with the sport.

Organized Baseball’s club owners needed the 1919 season to be perfect if they wished to erase black marks on the game’s reputation. They would need the media and fans to forget that “draft dodgers” would be back on ball diamonds. Although some ballplayers had enlisted and went overseas, they represented a minority of those eligible to serve.²¹² How would the media respond the first time a stadium of fans offered a standing ovation to a slacker? Would Americans even forgive men like “Shoeless” Joe Jackson? Baseball magnates had to proceed

²¹⁰ “Find Baseball Game More Exciting Than War: In a Letter Home a Soldier Says War is Just Plain Hard Work,” (Boston, MA), *Boston Daily Globe*, July 12, 1918.

²¹¹ “Baseball in the Trenches,” (Baltimore, MD), *The Baltimore Sun*, September 22, 1918.

²¹² Contemporary accounts revealed that only sixty current and former professional baseball players were in the American Expeditionary Forces by November of 1918. Jim Leeke, *From the Dugout to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 188.

with caution if they hoped to repair the damages such men had inflicted on baseball's cultural significance.

A few weeks after the armistice, American League President Ban Johnson announced that Army Chief of Staff General Peyton March had expressed the War Department's support for the game to return "with the usual regular schedule."²¹³ The government's endorsement to resume play was a critical first step Organized Baseball needed to plan for the 1919 season. The media provided more relief by publishing stories with a "forgive and forget" message. "Our war madness of six months ago," declared *The Sporting News*, "has subsided to a great degree."²¹⁴ The magazine's editor, Earl Obenshain, asserted that attacks on baseball equated to "maligning the integrity of the United States."²¹⁵ When baseball legend and Captain in the Chemical War Service, Ty Cobb, returned to the U.S., he predicted that the war had actually rejuvenated baseball: "it's going to boom this season as it has never done before."²¹⁶ Even T.L. Huston, who chastised the owners and players during the war, walked back his comments. He looked forward to a new season and claimed that ballplayers had done their part both abroad and on the home front.²¹⁷ Everyone within baseball was doing and saying the right things, but how would the fans respond?

²¹³ "Government OK for Major Baseball: Leagues to Resume in 1919, Ban Johnson Announces," (Boston, MA), *Boston Daily Globe*, December 5, 1919.

²¹⁴ "Times and Spirit Change: Come back Joe Jackson," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 66, No. 17, January 2, 1919.

²¹⁵ J.G. Taylor Spink, *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*, (New York: The Vail-Ballou Press, 1947), 61.

²¹⁶ "Ty Cobb to Quit Baseball Field; Back From War," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1918.

²¹⁷ Huston Takes Back Lot of What He Said: He Can See Now That Baseball Did It's Bit in War," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 66, No. 18, January 9, 1919.

John Heydler offered public reassurance that Americans could look forward to a promising future at ballparks across the nation, but not all the owners shared that optimism.²¹⁸ During the National Commission's first meeting in January 1919, it addressed rumors that had surfaced the previous season. After the War Department had announced the "Work or Fight" order, a New York newspaper, *The Sun*, floated a story that conditions within Organized Baseball were so chaotic, the owners had debated replacing the Commission's three-man board with a single head.²¹⁹ Days after *The Sun* article, John Tener had resigned as the National League president protesting the league's response to "Work or Fight." According to *The Sun*, the only thing that would "help the game's image" was the removal of both Ban Johnson and August Herrmann from the Commission.²²⁰

An overhaul of Organized Baseball's governing board could represent a good-faith gesture by the owners to demonstrate remorse for their response to the war. Yet, the drive to restructure the game's leadership would extend well beyond the public relations issue they anticipated for 1919. Although most National League club owners expressed interest in a one-man commission, they would only endorse that move if the appointee came from outside Organized Baseball. They wanted someone who could act independently and in the best interest of the entire league. Only the owners of the two New York teams, Charles Ebbets and Charles A. Stoneham, opposed the idea of the one-man commission outright. Considered one of the most powerful owners in Organized Baseball, Ebbets warned the league of the risks associated with

²¹⁸ Meeting of Board of Director of National League Clubs, December 11, 1918, Box 4, Folder 31, National League Meeting Minutes, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²¹⁹ Annual Meeting of National Commission Minutes, January 6, 1919, Box 76, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²²⁰ Shortstop, "Purified Baseball to Follow Chaos, New Era to Come," *The Sun*, August 11, 1918, Box 113, Folder 3, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

consolidating the commission's power under one person. He liked the current three-man structure but opposed the conflict of interest created by the third member being a club owner. Philadelphia's William F. Baker agreed, recommending that the league move to a one-man commission or replace Garry Herrmann since he was also the owner of the Cincinnati Reds. Without a consensus, they tabled the topic for a later date.²²¹

Although the owners were not prepared to overhaul baseball's ruling body, they knew they still had to polish their image.²²² If the owners could prove they were proud patriots by going out of their way to recognize ex-soldiers, then perhaps that would convince the fans to forgive the transgressions of 1918. Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey announced his plan to invite 2,000 wounded soldiers to a game on May 3.²²³ On April 24, John Heydler sent a letter to General John J. Pershing thanking him for his bravery and leadership of the American Expeditionary Forces during the war. Also enclosed was a 1919 league pass to all games for the entire season at any National League ballpark.²²⁴ *The Sporting News* predicted that fans would rush back to the stadiums to see their heroes of "over there." The idea was captivating. Americans could stand and cheer for their local hero who was also a national hero. "Just imagine," the article declared, "what ovations some of those boys who have been promoted for bravery or decorated upon the fields of battle will receive when they step to bat or take their

²²¹ Meeting of Board of Directors of NL Clubs, January 15, 1919, NL Meeting Minutes, Box 5, Folder 1, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²²² Meeting of Board of Directors of NL Clubs, January 15, 1919, NL Meeting Minutes, Box 5, Folder 1, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²²³ "2,000 Wounded Yanks at Ball Game May 3," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1919.

²²⁴ John Heydler to John J. Pershing, April 24, 1919, Box 93, John J. Pershing Papers, Library of Congress Archives, Washington, D.C.

positions upon the field.”²²⁵ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* also reminded Americans that, “Baseball Heroes Are War Heroes, Too,” printing a picture of three professional ballplayers in their military uniforms to underscore that message.²²⁶

Yet, behind the coalition of positive publicity, baseball magnates doubted that fans would rush back to support the National Pastime. The greed and arrogance that had led to the owners’ confrontation with the War Department in 1918 was hidden away as the 1919 season approached. The owners decided to delay Opening Day and reduce the schedule by fourteen games. Still, *The Sporting News* acknowledged that owners’ financial concerns were the main factor that led to this decision.²²⁷ Some believed that the country needed time to readjust after the war. The National League also planned to cut player salaries in anticipation of lackluster attendance.²²⁸

When games resumed, the owners’ fears about fan apathy turned out to be unwarranted. In a preseason exhibition in Los Angeles, the largest turnout of fans in over two years watched the Chicago Cubs play against a local minor league team. The New York state legislature finally legalized Sunday baseball games, and season opening games across both leagues were well attended, including a sellout in Cincinnati.²²⁹ Fan enthusiasm showed no sign of declining as the season progressed. By mid-summer the *New York Times* proclaimed that baseball had “staged a

²²⁵ Henry P. Edwards, “Big Days When Ball Players Come Home,” (St. Louis, MO), *Sporting News*, November 14, 1918.

²²⁶ “Baseball Heroes Are War Heroes Too,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1919.

²²⁷ “He Reckons That Game Has Learned A Lesson,” (St. Louis, MO), *Sporting News*, December 26, 1918.

²²⁸ “National League Salary Reduction May Cause Strike of Baseball Players,” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, January 16, 1919.

²²⁹ “Major League Chiefs Optimistic Over Outlook for 1919 Season,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 67, No. 7, April 24, 1919.

tremendous comeback,” with attendance at nearly every professional baseball park on a record-setting pace.²³⁰ When the season ended, the World Series matched the Chicago White Sox of the American League and the Cincinnati Reds of the National League.

If the season was any indication, the owners hoped for a highly profitable World Series. They set a best-of-nine series in hopes that they could offset some of the revenue they lost by shortening the regular season. Fans descended on Cincinnati on October 1 where the two teams met for Game One. Some hotels reported up to fifteen men crowded into rooms in hopes of finding a ticket for the game, or simply to place a bet on the series. Odds makers picked the talented White Sox to win. Chicago manager Kid Gleason announced that Eddie Cicotte, one of the best pitchers in baseball that season, would start the first game for the White Sox. Cicotte had battled soreness in his pitching arm toward the end of the regular season, but he told reporters that day that his arm felt great. Several players on the White Sox were certain they would return to Chicago up two games on the Reds.²³¹

Reporters from all over the country were in Cincinnati to cover the series for a population who had rediscovered an appetite for baseball. The media, fans, and owners all hoped for a drama-filled series providing the perfect ending to baseball’s resurgent season. They did not wait long. The Reds leadoff hitter, second baseman Morrie Rath, watched Cicotte’s first pitch, but took the second pitch of the game to the ribs. That put him on first base and Rath soon came around to score that inning. Cicotte’s arm may have felt great, but his performance was far from it. He labored through four innings, allowing six runs before Gleason pulled him from the game.

²³⁰ “Intense Interest Shown in Sports: Record-Breaking Attendance Registered at All Kinds of Contests Since War’s Close.” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, June 29, 1919.

²³¹ “World Series Begins Today: Chicago Americans and Cincinnati Nationals The Rivals,” (Baltimore, MD), *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 1919.

Cincinnati went on to a convincing 9-1 win. In the second game, things got worse. The White Sox out hit the Reds, ten to four, but only mustered two runs, losing 4-2. When the series shifted to Chicago for the third game, the White Sox finally entered the win column. Rookie pitcher Dickie Kerr quieted the Reds' bats earning a 3-0 victory. But the Reds stormed back to take Games Four and Five, increasing their lead to three games. Kerr pitched the White Sox to another victory in game six, and Cicotte's arm finally came around in game seven, and the White Sox pulled within one game of Cincinnati in the series, heading into Game Eight.

Now Kid Gleason decided to pitch Lefty Williams despite poor performances in the two games he had pitched in the series so far. Gleason's decision sealed Chicago's fate. The Reds hammered Williams, who did not even make it out of the first inning. Cincinnati won Game Eight and took the series five games to three. The city of Cincinnati celebrated the team's first championship in the sixteen-year history of the World Series.²³² "Reds Won Fair and Square," *The Sporting News* declared. Still, Americans wondered: how had the heavy favorites looked so bad? White Sox players suggested that their team had not been able to maintain its focus in the final weeks of the regular season, and that had followed them into the World Series. Fans' belief in "momentum" as a thing that could affect the outcome of games made the excuse sound plausible.²³³

Despite such claims, an ominous rumor swirled. Players on the White Sox had conspired with gamblers to intentionally lose the series. Illicit or not, sports gambling was a big business in 1919. An estimated two million dollars had changed hands on World Series bets alone.²³⁴ For

²³² Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded*, (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2007), 20-21.

²³³ "Reds Won Fair and Square and Well Deserve Honors," and "White Sox Far From Playing Real Game," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 68, No. 6, October 19, 1919.

²³⁴ Carney, *Burying the Black Sox*, 19.

two months rumors bubbled, until a December 1919 *Sporting News* story offered a smoking gun. Ray Schalk, the catcher for the White Sox, told a reporter that seven players on the team would not return for the 1920 season. He said they were the ones who had accepted money from gamblers to throw the series. Later, Schalk tried to rescind his comments claiming that the source of the allegation was unreliable. But the cat was out of the bag. *The Sporting News* questioned White Sox owner Charles Comiskey about the rumors. He scoffed explaining that he had hired investigators who had found nothing to corroborate the claim.²³⁵ Few within the media and Organized Baseball seemed interested in pursuing the rumor any further, and it faded from the papers – for a time.

Club owners were more interested in counting gate receipts from the World Series games than chasing after gossip however damaging it might turn out to be. With great enthusiasm, they announced that the 1919 World Series had been the most profitable in baseball history. The National Commission boasted that it had cut a check to the government for \$73,000 to comply with the War Department's extension of the war tax.²³⁶ Everything that the owners had wanted, and needed, from the season to reassert baseball's place in the minds and hearts of Americans appeared to have turned out perfectly. The National Commission's first meeting of 1920 focused on the overwhelming, and, for some, surprising success of 1919. They savored the fact that baseball had experienced one of its most prosperous seasons, noting that the fans' response "illustrated perfectly the remarkable hold which the sport exercised over the American people."

²³⁵ "Ray Schalk Never Hinted at Anything Wrong in Series," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 68, No. 18, January 8, 1920.

²³⁶ "Richest World's Series in the History of the Game," (Baltimore, MD), *The Sun*, October 10, 1919.

When the topic of a one-man commission came up, the owners again voted it down. Everything appeared to be back to normal.²³⁷

Although a few whispers about the series-fixing scandal lingered into the 1920 season, almost everyone within Organized Baseball and the media looked to put it behind them. By September, both the American League and National League races remained tight. Only one game separated Cleveland, New York, and Chicago in the standings, while Brooklyn and Cincinnati remained a half-game apart in the National League. Then, on September 4, word leaked that gamblers had paid a Chicago Cubs pitcher to throw a game against Philadelphia. That news unleashed a chain of events that threatened to take down Organized Baseball for good.²³⁸ Chicago's Cook County government launched a grand jury probe into gambling in Organized Baseball. That investigation soon learned that Charles Comiskey had held up World Series bonus checks for eight players on the White Sox. Why? What did Comiskey know about that surprising series that prompted him to single out those eight players? The rumors of a fixed series resurfaced.²³⁹

On September 27, a bombshell dropped. Eddie Cicotte, the starting pitcher for the White Sox in the first game of the 1919 Series, confessed that he had accepted money as part of a plot to rig the outcome for gamblers. Cicotte revealed that he had intentionally beamed Cincinnati's leadoff hitter to signal to the gamblers that the "fix was on." Shortly after Cicotte came forward, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson and others also confessed to taking part in the scheme. The eight men implicated in the World Series fix became known as the "Black Sox," but the game itself had

²³⁷ Annual Meeting of National Commission, January 8, 1920, Box 76, August Herrmann Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²³⁸ "Veeck Shows Vigor in Probing Charges: Cubs' President After Facts in Gambling Reports," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 70, No. 1, September 9, 1920.

²³⁹ Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 298-299.

been blackened already.²⁴⁰ The scandal forced Organized Baseball to confront the extent of gamblers' control on the sport. Gambling in baseball was not new. Before the 1903 National Agreement, players were known to accept money routinely to play poorly, a practice known as "hippodroming."²⁴¹ But the Black Sox scandal was a coordinated scheme that involved multiple players across multiple games in the most important series in all of sports. It was an embarrassment for baseball.²⁴² What would it take to survive the revelation of this level of corruption in the sport only two years after baseball's wartime blunder?

Once news reached the club owners, they accused the players of selling out their honor and duty to the sport and its fans.²⁴³ But this was the pot calling the kettle black. Americans did not have to think far back to recall when the owners had sold out their honor to their country. The immoral actions of eight players for the White Sox ripped open again Organized Baseball's self-inflicted wounds from the World War when the owners showed so little patriotism. The question that the *Chicago Tribune* had asked in 1918 seemed relevant once again: what purpose did professional baseball serve for the nation? It seemed rotten to its core.

Cubs stockholder Albert D. Lasker called for a new National Commission to restore the league's integrity. Lasker was a prominent Chicago advertising executive also well-connected politically as the assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee.²⁴⁴ He pushed the

²⁴⁰ Seymour, *The Golden Age*, 299.

²⁴¹ Seymour, *The Early Years*, 53.

²⁴² For more details on each player's status during the war, see the SABR Biography Project. www.sabr.org.

²⁴³ "On Baseball Situation," Unknown Author, October 1, 1920, A.G. Mills Papers, Box 2, Folder 11, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁴⁴ David Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis*, (South Bend: Diamond Communications, Inc., 1998), 162.

owners again to replace the three-man National Commission with one absolute arbiter, then leave him to clean up the game – and save their business.²⁴⁵ The most important decision facing the owners was choosing the right person to hold the position. First, they needed to ensure that he embodied the ideals they professed to believe were intrinsic to baseball. If the owners wanted a proper rehabilitation of the sport's image, they would need a person who was clean and had earned the respect of the entire nation. The new commissioner had to value fairness, because the Black Sox were dishonest. The person had to be strong and confident, because baseball faced a period of weakness and uncertainty. He had to be a proud and patriotic American since the owners and players received public scrutiny for an insufficient demonstration of patriotism during the war.

The second criteria the owners needed for the commissionership was someone who had no affiliation with professional baseball. One man they considered who met all of their requirements was General John J. Pershing. No one could question Pershing's patriotism or manhood after he had successfully led the American Expeditionary Forces in the World War. But having just won one war, Pershing was not eager to wade into another and the owners agreed that they should target someone with experience adjudicating contract disputes, an ongoing responsibility of the commission.²⁴⁶ The search turned to America's judicial system. National League President John Heydler suggested Federal Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis. That "trust-bustin'" judge had risen from obscurity to become a household name when he fined Standard Oil a whopping \$29 million for violating anti-trust laws.²⁴⁷ While the Standard Oil case earned

²⁴⁵ Burk, *Never Just a Game*, 235.

²⁴⁶ N.H. Fleischer to General John J. Pershing, October 2, 1920, Box 37, General John J. Pershing Papers, Library of Congress Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁴⁷ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 83.

Landis national notoriety, baseball magnates revered him for his role in the contentious Federal League case that had nearly ruined Organized Baseball.²⁴⁸

In 1914, the Federal League had formed as a new professional baseball league directly challenging Organized Baseball's hegemony in the United States. Organized Baseball owners immediately labored to sink the league, blocking the Federal League's access to professional players. In response, the Federal League filed suit against American and National League owners. Federal League officials picked Judge Landis to preside over the case because he had used anti-trust laws to go after John D. Rockefeller. Surely, he would uphold his own precedent. The Federal League argued that, just like Standard Oil, Organized Baseball had a monopoly. That looked like an airtight argument. However, Federal League owners had not considered that Landis was an ardent baseball fan. He had attended Cubs and White Sox games regularly and felt great excitement trying to predict plays while watching. Also, he claimed that he had turned down a chance to play professional baseball because he wanted to remain true to the amateur spirit of the game.²⁴⁹

At the start of the trial, Landis made a stark announcement, "Any blows at the thing called baseball would be regarded by this court as a blow to a national institution." Although Landis knew that Organized Baseball fit within the definition of a "monopoly" according to the law, he rejected the notion that baseball should be classified as a "business." When one of the attorneys had used the word "labor" to describe the duties of ballplayers, Landis barked back: "As a result of thirty years of observation, I am shocked because you call playing baseball

²⁴⁸ J.G. Taylor Spink, *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*, (New York: The Vail-Ballou Press, 1947), 52.

²⁴⁹ "Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis Supreme Baseball Ruler: Accepts Position as Chairman of Baseball Tribunal at Salary of \$42,500 Annually," (Nashville, TN), *Nashville Tennessean*, November 13, 1920.

‘labor.’” If he acknowledged baseball as a business, then Landis would have to apply the law as he did against Rockefeller. But by claiming that it was something else, he could protect the sport he loved. In his closing remarks, Landis reminded the court that baseball was a “public institution that no one shall think of harming.”²⁵⁰ If he had ruled in favor of the Federal League, he believed chaos would have ensued as teams in all leagues would have battled for the rights to players.²⁵¹ Knowing that a rigid application of the law could have ruined professional baseball, Landis withheld a decision. He hoped that justice deferred would lead the Federal League to dissolve and remove him from the burden of ruling. Landis got his wish in 1917.²⁵² The World War made it difficult even for Organized Baseball to field talented professional baseball players. The Federal League owners agreed to a \$600,000 settlement in return for dropping the suit. Organized Baseball had dodged a bullet.²⁵³

Many believed that Landis’ tactic in the Federal League case preserved professional baseball in America. Heydler reasoned that if Landis had saved Organized Baseball once, he could do it again. On Monday, November 8, 1920, six men representing Organized Baseball met with Landis to offer him the chairmanship of the new governing body. Landis requested ten days to consider the offer. While he pondered, he received a letter from his son Reed urging him to take the position. Reed told his father that working as the baseball commissioner offered Landis an opportunity to extend his power and influence beyond the reach he had as a federal judge.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Spink, *Judge Landis*, 35.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 39.

²⁵² Burk, *Never Just a Game*, 207-208.

²⁵³ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 157.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 166.

Reed referred specifically to America's youth. "Oughtn't something be done," he asked, "to keep the good old game from being taken away from them?"²⁵⁵

On November 12, Landis took up the opportunity to begin rehabilitating the national game, in his terms. When the owners proposed "Directory-General of Baseball" as the title for the position, Landis retorted, "That sounds too high-falutin'." They settled on "commissioner."²⁵⁶ "He is worth \$350,000 for seven years," the *Chicago Tribune* declared, "to a game which finds itself morally disorganized and out of repute. Landis is a synonym for a square deal, and nothing could rehabilitate a scandal-shot enterprise so quickly as the guaranty of Landis' name."²⁵⁷ Although the *Tribune* accented Landis' career as a judge that brought him fame, there was much more that made his name good.

The name "Kenesaw Mountain Landis" served as a memorial to his father. In 1862, Dr. Abraham Landis had left the town of Millville, Ohio to join the 35th Ohio Volunteer Infantry as a surgeon.²⁵⁸ He admired President Lincoln and had taught his children to revere their country. He lived what he preached and instilled in his family a strong sense of nationalism. He had a love for rural life and believed it a great honor to serve with men from all over the North who shared his patriotism.²⁵⁹ On June 22, 1864, Union General William T. Sherman's march through the South had stalled just north of Atlanta near Kennesaw Mountain where Confederate divisions had established a defensive position. Dr. Landis had set up his surgeon's tent out of range of

²⁵⁵ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 171.

²⁵⁶ Spink, *Judge Landis*, 75.

²⁵⁷ "Baseball Wants Landis," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Tribune*, November 10, 1920.

²⁵⁸ Lincoln Landis, *From Pilgrimage to Promise: Civil War Heritage and the Landis Boys of Logansport, Indiana*, (Westminster: Heritage Books, 2007), 11.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 43.

enemy fire on that day, or so he thought. While he was operating on a wounded soldier, a stray cannonball ricocheted off a nearby tree, ripped through the tent, and smashed his leg.

Instinctively, Dr. Landis grabbed the closest rifle to defend himself, but not from Rebel troops. Instead, he used the gun to fend off his fellow surgeons to keep them from amputating his maimed leg. He wanted to walk away from the war a whole man.²⁶⁰

After Abraham returned to his home in Ohio, having kept his leg, he continued to practice medicine, but on a more limited basis. He had nearly lost the ability to provide for his family but was able to continue serving as the sole breadwinner, a cultural expectation for men of his time. He chose to preserve his life-altering moment at Kennesaw Mountain in the name of his fourth son, born on November 20, 1866. Abraham named his child after the location of the horrific moment that had nearly killed him. Sacrifice and survival against the odds and the memory of war were all bound up in the name Kenesaw Mountain Landis.²⁶¹ Abraham had identified himself as one of the courageous men, the “true patriots,” who had fought to preserve the Union. Kenesaw had to confront – and honor – the meaning of his name, and he began at an early age.²⁶²

As a boy, Kenesaw attended reunions of the 35th Ohio Volunteer Infantry with his father. The experience shaped his understanding of heroism, which he associated with the most important civic duty: military service to save the nation. He had seen the strong bond of brotherhood forged in the Civil War when he stood in the presence of proud and courageous veterans. He witnessed the physical embodiment of “true sacrifice” in each man who had served

²⁶⁰ Landis, *From Pilgrimage to Promise*, 38.

²⁶¹ In numerous retellings of the spelling of his name with only one “N,” Kenesaw Mountain Landis claims his father forgot the correct spelling of the mountain.

²⁶² Landis, *From Pilgrimage to Promise*, 40.

with his father. He experienced firsthand the meaning of integrity, which informed his values as an adult. He believed that, “a man in a position of trust owes 100 percent loyalty.”²⁶³ If a man trusted the government to provide him liberty, then that man should be trusted to fight to preserve it for himself and others. Growing up as the son of a Civil War veteran, Landis learned to construct a belief about manhood and citizenship in relation to the obligations of war.

Landis also learned how to apply ideas about “right” and “wrong” from his father. At one of the reunions he observed Abraham drinking whiskey with the other members of the 35th Ohio Volunteers. His father had always preached the evils of alcohol, and Kenesaw asked his father to rectify his actions. “An Army reunion would be kind of a poor thing,” Abraham allowed, “if there wasn’t a little bit of alcohol along with it to refresh the memory of those in attendance.” That ruling favored wisdom over consistency and left an impression on Landis. His admiration for his father forced Landis to come to terms with certain ambiguities in life. Certainly, men who had demonstrated “bravery” and “manhood” had a greater claim to determining the boundaries of virtue than any other category of men.²⁶⁴ Later on, Landis acquitted a nineteen-year-old receiving teller who plead guilty to embezzling \$90,000 from the National City Bank of Ottawa, Illinois. The man supported his mother and two sisters, and according to Landis, the real thieves were the directors of the bank who only paid the teller \$90 a month while requiring him to handle thousands of dollars daily. Critics accused Landis of hypocrisy, acting as a reactionary arbiter of the law, but right or wrong, Landis administered decisions based on the lessons he had learned from his father and the Civil War generation. His law was a living thing.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Landis, *From Pilgrimage to Promise*, 126.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 50.

²⁶⁵ Paul W. Eaton, “Impeaching Judge Landis,” *Baseball Magazine*, May 1921, A.G. Mills Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Landis could never escape his father's legacy that was tied to war, sacrifice, and masculine honor because he carried it with him everywhere in his name. He received reminders throughout his life about the deeper meaning that his name carried. Serving as a federal judge he received letter from William Dunn, who had been a Civil War drummer boy in the 31st Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Dunn wanted to remind Landis that, "There are to this day, close to Kenesaw Mountain, ten thousand boys in blue who sleep there. Their monument is perpetual—Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia. They were our comrades, God bless them all."²⁶⁶ If the mountain was a permanent Civil War memorial, the man who bore its name was the living memorial. How many times when he signed his name as a federal judge and as baseball commissioner, did he remember the sacrifices made by his father, the 35th Ohio Volunteers, and the all of the brave veterans of the Civil War?

Like other leaders of the Progressive Era, Landis worked to teach all Americans the patriotic ideals they learned from the Civil War generation. He believed that the United States contributed to the Allied victory in the World War because of the character, intelligence, and "gallant performance of probably the finest outfit...that was ever organized." He drew parallels to the Civil War noting that the last time "a finer body of men [had] gotten together...was the outfit of '61-65."²⁶⁷ When the nation had called on brave men to fight in 1917, most soldiers explained that they had chosen to fight from a sense of duty, patriotism, and love of country.

²⁶⁶ William Dunn to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, April 13, 1919, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 9, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁶⁷ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Address before the Wednesday Evening Session Joint Meeting of the American Legion of South Dakota, July 30, 1924, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 58, Folder 17, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

Their response gratified the Progressive reformers who had worked to instill nationalistic pride in the rising generation.²⁶⁸

Landis, although too old to fight, believed that he fully understood the burden carried by the men who honored their civic duty of military service. He hoped to instill in the nation a reverence for veterans of war.²⁶⁹ Whenever the chance arose, he reminded Americans why soldiers should be considered heroes: “I thought of the job they were doing for me while I was living in comfort and security three thousand miles behind the lines.”²⁷⁰ Landis stood by his word. In October of 1916, he had sent cigars, ice cream, and cake to the First Illinois Cavalry. The soldiers sent him a thank you note that echoed his central themes, “We feel that we can best show our appreciation of these things,” they declared, “by a renewed offer of our humble services to our country in case of need.”²⁷¹

His ardent support for the military earned Landis wide acclaim among their ranks. Colonel C.E. Stoaler, who served during the World War, later wrote to Landis, “When I was going over the Argonne battlefields a year ago I cut a cane out of a hedge at La Belle Joyeuse Farm about two kilometers east of the town of Grandpré. At that time I cut it for the purpose of sending it to you as a souvenir of the war. The place where it was cut was the scene of very severe fighting as our men had to advance a considerable distance, with very little cover.”²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Edward A. Gutiérrez, *Doughboys on the Great War: How American Soldiers Viewed Their Military Service*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2014), 54.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

²⁷⁰ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, “Address before the Wednesday Evening Session Joint Meeting of the American Legion of South Dakota,” July 30, 1924, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 58, Folder 17, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁷¹ Several Officers of Illinois National Guard to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 30, 1916, Box 9, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁷² Colonel C.E. Stoaler to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 23, 1919, Box 9, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago,

What went through Landis' mind as he read that letter, discovering that the cane was a gift from the war? Perhaps he reflected on the meaning of bravery, service, sacrifice, and manhood. Over the years, Landis received numerous letters from Civil War veterans and soldiers of the World War, serving of a constant reminder to his personal experiences as a son and father of war veterans. Perhaps that was why he proudly displayed his staunch Americanism.

Landis served up his own son to the nation's call and he served bravely. Reed earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his gallant service in the World War. Secretary of War Newton Baker himself wrote to congratulate Landis on Reed's high honor. Landis could smile proudly knowing that his son carried on his grandfather's patriotic spirit.²⁷³ Abraham had survived captivity at Richmond's Libby Prison in 1863 and had almost lost a leg in 1864 in the fight to save the Union.²⁷⁴ Landis would not tolerate anyone who did not fully appreciate the liberties granted to them as an American citizen thanks to the sacrifices made by the Landis family and all other veterans' families. Landis constructed his worldview through his personal relationship to war, celebrating the actions of brave and selfless men. He believed that civic-minded manhood was the force that sustained democracy and held America together. "I would save the [Constitution]," he once declared, "by destroying the destroyer of the document." Any person was open to ridicule and, if possible, prosecution, if they did not recognize and appreciate that their civil liberties depended on brave soldiers to defend them.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Newton D. Baker to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 14, 1918, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 9, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

²⁷⁴ Landis, *From Pilgrimage to Promise*, 31.

²⁷⁵ Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Protective League of Minneapolis, January 31, 1920, Box 58, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

The most famous case that demonstrated Landis' patriotic resolve was the trial of the leadership of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), America's most radical and inclusive labor union. In 1917, the government charged IWW leader Bill Haywood, and over one hundred members for "conspiring to hinder, delay and prevent by force the implementation of the declaration of war against the Central Powers."²⁷⁶ He was a frame-up to shut down the antiwar left. The Espionage Act emboldened Landis to impose a narrow interpretation of liberties afforded to citizens in a time of war, all but abrogating the First Amendment. "When the country is at peace," Landis proclaimed, "it is a legal right of free speech to oppose going to war and to oppose preparation for war. But when once war is declared that right ceases."²⁷⁷ The trial presented Landis with a national platform to define "un-American" actions and he welcomed that opportunity. He believed that anyone who was not one hundred percent behind the war effort hindered the prospects of victory.²⁷⁸

Landis imprisoned and fined most of the IWW members but handed down the maximum penalty of twenty years in prison on Haywood and fourteen others. "The jury found those men guilty," Landis asked, "how any verdict except a verdict of guilty could have reached on that evidence. God almighty only knows."²⁷⁹ Reed had written to Landis while he was still in Europe to affirm the important role he believed his father played. "Glad to read of the I.W.W. case. Every I.W.W., pacifist, and conscientious objector at home, as well as the idlers, is not only lengthening the war, but risking my damn 'neque'. It's going to be a big job to clean up this Hun

²⁷⁶ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 119.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 134.

²⁷⁸ Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Protective League of Minneapolis, January 31, 1920, Box 58, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

fellow, and the most important part must be done right in the U.S.”²⁸⁰ Protecting America was personal to Landis. The owners knew that Landis was capable of injecting baseball with patriotic character, but did they know the level to which he would push the game to prove its patriotism?

In remaining to the Progressive spirit, Landis had to clean up baseball corruption. He also used the sport to promote civic pride, which he believed served to reform American society for the better. Baseball could become a process that turned boys into civic-minded men willing to serve their country.²⁸¹ “If this great game [of baseball] is permitted to be dragged back,” Landis warned, “then that idol that has been erected in the hearts of American Boyhood will be shattered. And believe me, men, the disastrous effect of such an occurrence would be far-reaching.”²⁸² Although the role of commissioner expanded his power to shape society, Landis did not want to relinquish the influence he had as a federal judge. He requested that he remain on the bench while he served as commissioner. Abraham Mills and John Heydler exchanged letters expressing their confidence that Landis could perform both duties.²⁸³ Heydler suggested that Landis would actually bring more prestige to the position, and to baseball, if he remained on the bench.²⁸⁴ He realized that Landis built a reputation as a “judge for the people” and whose patriotism was never in doubt. The letters Landis received from public and private citizens all over the country confirmed that he was the perfect fit for commissioner. Arthur Capper, U.S.

²⁸⁰ Reed Landis to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, June 22, 1918, Box 6, Folder 3, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁸¹ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 7.

²⁸² E.F. Wolfe to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 27, 1924, Box 13, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁸³ A.G. Mills to John Heydler, November 15, 1920, A.G. Mills Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

²⁸⁴ John Heydler to A.G. Mills, November 19, 1920, A.G. Mills Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Senator from Kansas, conveyed his confidence that baseball would finally be “on the square.”²⁸⁵ M.L. Turner, President of Western National Bank, asserted that “I think if our whole country was made up of Justices of your type, character and fairness, it would be much better off.”²⁸⁶

The club owners asked Landis to take control of baseball at a time when some believed a struggle for the very conscience of the nation was underway. Shortly after the 1919 World Series concluded, the Department of Justice launched a massive operation to suppress communism and anarchism in the United States. The government believed that the rise of Bolshevism in Europe threatened to poison the American populace, and massive immigration contributed to the “red menace.” By the spring of 1920, even Boston’s police department had gone out on strike. Under the direction of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, “The Palmer Raids” targeted anyone who belonged to the new Communist Party as well as “agitators” who were not yet citizens. Palmer claimed that the government had to deport immigrants and imprison Americans who disseminated communist propaganda to protect the core principles of democracy.²⁸⁷ Similarly, President Wilson approached the fight against Bolshevism, which aimed to remove persons for sowing discontent.²⁸⁸

Government officials believed that the greatest threat posed by the “Red Menace” was a communist invasion of American institutions. In the April 1920 issue of the *North American Review*, Republican David Jayne Hill described that type of invasion: “The greatest danger now

²⁸⁵ Arthur Capper to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, November 15, 1920, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 10, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁸⁶ M.L. Turner to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, August 17, 1916, Box 9, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁸⁷ “Palmer Pushing War on Radicals: Only About Half the 4,000 Aliens Who Are Sought Have Been Taken,” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, January 5, 1920.

²⁸⁸ Markku Ruotsila, *British and American Anticommunism Before the Cold War*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 139.

menacing the Republic is the control by well-organized, persistent and vociferous private groups of men and women aiming to acquire power to influence the action of public officers.”²⁸⁹ Landis agreed with Hill. “If I were in that legislature [with socialists],” he declared, “and it was proved...they sympathized with that treasonable doctrine of the socialists’ war platform, adopted after we got into that war, I would vote to expel them from that legislature.”²⁹⁰ His stance on Bolshevism informed his decision in the IWW case, and he believed that normalizing “radicals” in politics would pose dire consequences for the future of America. Landis labeled the IWW a “treasonable organization” along with the Socialist Party because they tried to convince men to escape military service and taught them how. He called for a declaration of war on “Bolshevism and Socialism and I.W.W.-ism,” because, according to Landis, they were “all tied up together and that the fundamentals are the same.” He did not want to see shades of gray in anything he viewed as a threat to the ideals he believed defined America.²⁹¹

The Red Scare exposed American vulnerabilities, but some maintained that as long as there was baseball, the United States could combat any corrosive ideology. Knights of Columbus Chairman, William J. Mulligan, conveyed baseball’s imagined power in American life in an interview in the *Hartford Courant*. He asserted that baseball could “stomp out Bolshevism in Russia.” If only American forces had a chance to teach the game to the Russians, he claimed, they would abandon Bolshevism and develop “a morale similar to the American morale.”²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Ruotsila, *British and American Anticommunism*, 169.

²⁹⁰ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Address before the Wednesday Evening Session Joint Meeting of the American Legion of South Dakota, July 30, 1924, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 58, Folder 17, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁹¹ Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Protective League of Minneapolis, January 31, 1920, Box 58, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁹² “Baseball as Cure for Bolshevism,” (Hartford, CT), *Hartford Courant*, April 16, 1919.

Certainly some believed baseball's presence safeguarded American principles and its absence would weaken America's defense against socialism and other supposedly un-American ideologies. Men like Mulligan and Landis wanted to preserve baseball's future because it helped secure the future of the United States. Judge Charles MacDonald, presiding over the investigation into baseball gambling in 1920, articulated what Americans thought baseball meant. "It is an American institution," he declared, "having its place prominently and significantly in the life of the people... The national game promotes respect for proper authority, self-confidence, fair-mindedness, quick judgment and self-control."²⁹³ Landis feared the consequences the United States faced if Americans lost faith in democratic institutions. One of the most important of those institutions was baseball.

The Black Sox scandal erupted shortly after Organized Baseball's embarrassing performance of greedy patriotism during the war years. Together, they threatened to destroy Americans' confidence in baseball as one of the institutions responsible for preserving civic-minded manhood in America. Left unaddressed, the game might have fell out of favor as a professional sport altogether. But it did not. A month after the news broke that Landis had accepted the offer to become commissioner of Organized Baseball, John M. Ward, a former professional ballplayer, had written to Landis to express humiliation "that some of the players had fallen into the net of the gamblers." He warned that "reasonable suspicion" would remain in the game even after Landis officially assumed the role as commissioner. Ward reminded Landis that baseball, "must be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion; for in no other way will it be

²⁹³ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 97.

possible to answer that large element that is ever so ready to attribute dishonesty to every sport.”²⁹⁴

Landis knew that his actions had to raise baseball above suspicion and restore the sport’s integrity. But he saw his job as more than just saving baseball. After becoming commissioner, he articulated what was at stake,

“When that ball player commits a wrong act, or is guilty of conduct unbecoming a gentlemen, the American boy has an idol shattered in his youthful heart...and there is no telling how far-reaching the effect of that may be in the life of the nation. The protection and safeguarding of this idol of the American boy I consider a more important work than I can do on the bench of the United States District Court.”²⁹⁵

Baseball’s breaking point exacerbated the belief that the fabric of American society was tearing apart at the seams. Stitching back together the nation’s morals and principles was left in the hands of those in charge of prominent institutions. Landis not only had to save a sport; he had to redeem an institution vital to teaching democratic principles. He saw that path as the same one. Both relied on civic-minded manhood. In Landis’ mind, masculine traits were inseparable from characteristics of civic virtue. He wanted men to believe that their manhood was tied directly to civic obligations determined by the state. From voting to marching off to war, a man had to be prepared to accept both as his duty for America to prosper. The commissionership afforded him the power to put his plan into action.

²⁹⁴ John M. Ward to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 2, 1920, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 10, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁹⁵ Edgar G. Brands, “The Life Story of Kenesaw Mountain Landis,” *The Sporting News Baseball Guide and Record Book*, (St. Louis: Sporting News Publishing Company, 1945), 113.

CHAPTER 5. REAL SPORTS AND REAL MEN

Since 1906, the building at 122 South Michigan Avenue in Chicago had served as the office of the judgeship for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. On the morning of January 12, 1921, the powers of that office expanded, as Kenesaw Mountain Landis officially began his tenure as Commissioner of Organized Baseball.²⁹⁶ The site seemed fitting for the headquarters of baseball's supreme and moral arbiter. The office had been Landis' in 1916 when professional baseball had faced its first challenge. The Federal League had threatened Organized Baseball's hegemony, and Landis delivered salvation, slow but sure, to the owners of American and National League clubs. Chicago was also home to the White Sox, and the city had served as a backdrop to the 1919 World Series fix. If the commissioner truly was the righteous reformer needed to vanquish baseball's corruption, then the site of his office symbolized the force of good that baseball needed to combat the evil of the immoral actions of the eight Black Sox.

The fallout of the scandal posed a far greater danger for professional baseball than the Federal League suit. Players within Organized Baseball were responsible for the corruption which aligned the scandal in the public's mind with the concern over internal threats of political subversion to the United States. In the years after the World War, American leaders worried that anti-American ideologies had invaded American institutions. They believed the country's future would be compromised if subversives were not uncovered and neutralized. The Palmer Raids took direct action to defeat that political threat and restore public confidence. Likewise, baseball had to remove the individuals who threatened its future. With Landis running the show, baseball

²⁹⁶ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 39.

still had the potential to influence millions of Americans, making the sport capable of repairing American character.

The club owners chose Landis to be commissioner because of the reputation he had built as a federal judge. But how would he govern over Organized Baseball? Anyone who knew the meaning of the name “Kenesaw Mountain,” already had their answer. The ideals and beliefs that formed the core of Landis’ identity did not cease to exist when he took on the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Organized Baseball. A staunch Americanist, those principles informed the decisions he made for professional baseball. The lessons that Landis learned from his father remained with him throughout life. Even after his father’s death, Landis continued to attend reunions of the 35th Ohio Volunteers. He had taken on John D. Rockefeller, convicted members of the Industrial Workers of the World, and he remained committed to honoring war veterans. He worked tirelessly to ensure that the nation served the needs of the men who risked their lives to defend America. He consistently used his power over baseball to move the nation in a direction he believed would best serve the interests of ex-soldiers – and the common good.²⁹⁷

Landis’ real and perceived power as baseball commissioner reached well beyond the stadiums of the sport. The former governor of Michigan, Chase S. Osborne, urged him on: “One of the first ruling forces of America are sports. If they can be made clean and legitimate, it will be the creation of a vast influence for the best things in American life.”²⁹⁸ Private citizen J.M. Clarke agreed, “Here’s hoping for a long and glorious career as the Supreme Monarch of our National game. We need you for perpetuating its growth for the unborn generations.”²⁹⁹ More

²⁹⁷ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to William Harridge, January 12, 1942, Box 47, Folder 13, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁹⁸ Chase S. Osborne to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, April 29, 1921, Box 11, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

²⁹⁹ J.M. Clarke to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, January 15, 1921, Box 43, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis

than just the supreme arbiter of Organized Baseball, Americans would come to see Landis as the commissioner of American character and manhood. That suited his own imperatives. He would establish the moral parameters for every baseball league, young and old, amateur to professional, and so the scope of his reach had the power to influence tens of millions of Americans.

Letters that congratulated Landis on his appointment piled up on his desk, a testament to the mass appeal he held. They came from Americans young and old, obscure and well-known. T.L. Huston, the part owner of the New York Yankees who had volunteered for the war, warned him of the task ahead, "There is much to do to purify base ball, both in the playing and in the business end. The problems will in due time present themselves to you." Knowing Huston was a veteran of war, Landis undoubtedly placed him in the category of a "true" American. Huston had been on the forefront of creating patriotic celebrations in baseball before he had enlisted in 1917 and had openly chastised club owners for their response to the "Work or Fight" order. He knew firsthand what went on in closed door meetings that constituted the "business end" of baseball. If Landis was not fully aware that Organized Baseball's issue ran deeper than a group of players, he had confirmation from an inside member about it. Yet Huston had confidence in Landis' eventual triumph, "I am sure that all elements of Organized Base Ball feel that with you as a head of the organization they will receive a square deal."³⁰⁰

As the nation waited to see how Landis would wield his power, Charles Comiskey, the owner of the Chicago White Sox, took matters into his own hands. In March, Comiskey told the eight Black Sox that they were fired.³⁰¹ They would not play in the 1921 season. Would they

Papers, Box 58, Folder 1, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁰⁰ T.L. Huston to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, November 17, 1920, Box 10, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁰¹ Associated Press, "Comisky Fires Completely Seven Former White Sox," (Nashville, TN), *Nashville Tennessean*, March 17, 1921.

ever play again? Would they sign with different teams in 1922? If they were no longer allowed to play, would they be able to manage in the future? The players' status in Organized Baseball was at question. Landis would have to decide the long-term fate of the players, and with it, Organized Baseball's relationship with America.

The league set opening day for April 13, and every major league club begged Landis to participate in their opening day ceremonies. "I can't go to all of them," he cried.³⁰² He chose to stay close to home, accepting the Chicago Cubs' invitation. The night before that game, Landis appeared as the keynote speaker at a dinner the players, managers, and owners of Cubs and the St. Louis Cardinals. "There is a spirit of fair play and sportsmanship in the average American citizen," Landis told the crowd, that was more prevalent in the "baseball public" than in any other group. He acknowledged his role – and his stake – in the game's rehabilitation, but players had still more to win or lose. "You will be playing ball long after I have passed out of this activity," Landis declared. "I want you to feel that the thing you are devoting your lives to now is a calling which in America is not merely an honorable calling, but one which any man who has youth in his favor and on his side would be keen to aspire to."³⁰³ Landis wanted the players to understand how the national spotlight afforded them social power. Like it or not, they influenced America's youth. He would not let any group of players or owners steer the nation's future wrong.

To no one's surprise, Landis brought up gambling. All players, he said, had the responsibility to tell him about any suspicious activity that could be related to gambling. He

³⁰² "Judge Landis to See Cubs Play Cardinals," (Washington, D.C.), *Washington Post*, April 13, 1921.

³⁰³ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Address Before Chicago and St. Louis NL Teams at the Congress Hotel, Chicago, IL, April 12, 1921, Box 58, Folder 11, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

asked the players to imagine that they were in “an army face to face with an enemy in armed hostility and somebody was discovered in relation with an outside influence that had connections with the enemy troops. Of course, men would not debate the question whether or not they could expose that kind of person.”³⁰⁴ Landis was committed to eradicating gambling in baseball. His analogy equated actions that undermined baseball with acts of treason. Others agreed. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* argued that any player who succumbed to a bribe was in a class with “the soldier or sailor who would sell out his country and its flag in time of war.”³⁰⁵ The politics of war lingered in America’s public discourse and continued to influence how people understood acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Beyond that though, Landis instinctively grasped how important baseball was to the nation, and how deeply betrayed Americans felt by the Black Sox scandal.

Landis, the staunch patriot, was known to draw parallels among groups he labeled as subversives. He wanted the nation to question the intentions of any person critical of America. In a speech before the Irish Fellowship club in Rockford, Illinois in 1917, Landis had declared that the World War created only two categories of men: pro-American or pro-German.³⁰⁶ He believed draft dodging was one of the most treacherous acts a person could commit, and during the war years, he had kept a private list of men arrested for violating the Selective Service Act.³⁰⁷ Slackers may have looked like men, but in reality, they were subversives who rejected their civic duty and abandoned their claims to manhood along with it. Even at 51, Landis did not want his

³⁰⁴ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Address Before Chicago and St. Louis NL Teams at the Congress Hotel, Chicago, IL, April 12, 1921, Box 58, Folder 11, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁰⁵ Seymour, *The Golden Age*, 276.

³⁰⁶ “Anti-American Politicians Hit Hard by Landis,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 22, 1917.

³⁰⁷ “List of Slackers Indicted, Freeport, IL,” June 25, 1917, “Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers,” Box 9, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL

manly and patriotic ego challenged. He had written to Secretary of War Baker in 1917 requesting to be sent to France, demonstrating that what a man did was more important than his appearance.³⁰⁸ The Black Sox may have looked like other ballplayers, but they had sold their honor to gamblers. In his worldview that dealt in absolutes, Landis did not have to stretch his imagination to view the Black Sox in the same category as slackers and socialists. They all threatened America. They were all subversives and had to be removed.

Ordinary Americans affirmed Landis' Americanism, "Please accept the expression of thanks," wrote Dr. Emil L. Aison, "from a humble citizen who deeply appreciates the way you recently handled those who would enjoy the protection of American citizenship but would not bear its burdens." Aison felt discouraged by "the lack of the true spirit of Americanism shown from time to time by so many men and women who have every reason to be loyal and grateful for all this glorious land has given." Landis had noticed his faith: "The firmness and zeal which you show in the daily discharge of your duties is a comfort to true American citizenry. It is characteristic of a fearless and devoted American."³⁰⁹ In this view, Landis worried about the future of the nation if it lost baseball and understood that his initial actions as commissioner would establish the tone for his tenure and the ultimate success of his mission. Baseball had served as an institution that aided the process of Americanization.

By midsummer, Landis had yet to make a decision on the players implicated in the World Series fix. That would await the outcome of the Black Sox trial set for June 27, 1921. Had the eight players on the White Sox defrauded the public by throwing games during the 1919 World

³⁰⁸ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*), 197.

³⁰⁹ Dr. Emil L. Aison to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, April 29, 1921, Box 10, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 58, Folder 1, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

Serie? That was the charge before them. Before the trial, Comiskey's personal lawyer told the players that prosecutors intended to go after the gamblers.³¹⁰ The eight men followed their instruction. They admitted to accepting bribes and throwing the series. Yet, despite their confessions, the jury returned a verdict of "not guilty." After the bailiff read the verdict, a jubilant cheer erupted from the courtroom. The players, lawyers, jurors, and fans adjourned to an Italian restaurant nearby, though the celebration would not last long.³¹¹

The next day, Commissioner Landis issued his famous ruling, "Regardless of the verdict of juries, no player that throws a ball game; no player that undertakes or promises to throw a ball game; no player that sits in a conference with a bunch of crooked players and gamblers where the ways and means of throwing games are planned and discussed, and does not promptly tell his club about it, will ever play professional baseball."³¹² Landis sent a powerful message to all within Organized Baseball, and to fans all over the country. Baseball was his to reconstruct, and he planned to do it his way.

A permanent ban on the Black Sox was important for Organized Baseball's reputation, but vital to the nation's character. The role of baseball commissioner allowed Landis to have an influence on millions of Americans, especially young Americans. In 1909, a father from Chicago had written to Landis to request an autograph for his thirteen-year-old son. The man had wanted his signature because, "I know of nothing I can leave him that he would value more than the autographs of the famous men of to-day."³¹³ As a public figure, Landis understood that any man

³¹⁰ Carney, *Burying the Black Sox*, 126.

³¹¹ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*, 186-187.

³¹² "Weaver to Sue Chicago For Suspended Salary," (Baltimore, MD), *The Baltimore Sun*, August 4, 1921.

³¹³ J.S. Baster to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, November 23, 1909, Box 9, Folder 7, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

who reached a level of national prominence had the power to influence the youth of the nation. He also knew that he had control over an institution that employed hundreds of men who had become heroes through their talents as professional ballplayers. They had to represent the highest ideals of masculine character because of their hold over the imagination of boys all over America. Reconstructing baseball's hero ethos would be an effective, practical, and more far-reaching approach for his mission. Banning the Black Sox was a start.

In Landis' view, the eight men banned from the game carried a public service record that also tainted baseball's image. All of them evaded military conscription during the World War. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson had received the greatest public scrutiny when he chose to "work" instead of fight, but Eddie Cicotte and Chick Gandil received exemptions. "Lefty" Williams, "Happy" Felsch, Swede Risberg, and Buck Weaver sought employment in war-related industries. Fred McMullin claimed he was going to San Pedro, California to join the Navy but ended up playing baseball at a shipping yard. The Landis family had not honored their civic duty just so some of the most athletic men in America could escape theirs. The draft supplied sixty-seven percent of the troops who made up the American Expeditionary Forces, a disturbing number when leaders urged men to volunteer from a sense of patriotic duty.³¹⁴

What would happen if American boys grew up idolizing shirkers who avoided civic duty? What would happen to the character of the nation, and American masculinity, if boys idolized men so devoid of patriotism? Landis did not want "slackers" to infiltrate baseball denigrating the standard he wanted the sports hero ethos to inculcate. He wanted future generations to value the characteristics of civic-minded manhood. Although he was not able to

³¹⁴ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 15.

purge Organized Baseball of every ballplayer who had skipped the draft, he could compensate by requiring baseball to demonstrate a greater appreciation for the military.³¹⁵

Landis also wanted to expose the villains who manipulated the atmosphere of war for personal profit. “The English language, “he had declared, “is a bankrupt to enable me to give expression to the contempt that I feel for a man who, when this country was fighting for its rights, viewed the situation only as an opportunity to fatten his private purse.”³¹⁶ Did Landis know that baseball’s owners had looked to profit off Liberty Bonds during the World War? Abraham and Reed did not risk their lives for America just so the owners of professional baseball teams could plot ways to profit from the war. Baseball’s image problem ran much deeper than the Black Sox. That made Landis’ work to reconstruct the sport’s image infinitely more complex.

Commissioner Landis had to reorient baseball’s patriotism and respect for American nationalism if the sport was to carry the responsibilities associated with teaching civic-minded manhood. Landis explained the importance of honoring war veterans when he spoke on “fair play” before the Izaak Walton League, a hunting and conservation group. He recalled a moment in the fall of 1918, when General Headquarters ordered American forces to take a hill. Landis fudged the details, possibly to dramatize his point: “Tens of thousands of dead men who had failed in the same command; French and British and Canadian and Belgian and Australian armies protested in their dreamless sleep ‘you cannot take that hill.’” He described how the American Army, “your sons and brothers” achieved glory when they took the hill, and so helped

³¹⁵ For more details on each player’s status during the war, see the SABR Biography Project. www.sabr.org

³¹⁶ Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Protective League of Minneapolis, January 31, 1920, Box 58, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

to end the war. What accounted for such American exceptionalism? Training character, of just the sort baseball and its community nurtured. “It is in order that we may breed up in this country the type of citizenship, the class of man, that when the time comes, and it must come, will be enabled to keep faith in the discharge of the greatest duty that can fall to man with the sacred memory of soldiers that died in the taking of that hill.”³¹⁷ The Black Sox were far from the class of men Landis revered and banning them for life helped to sanctify baseball’s hero ethos.

Landis’ commitment to honoring the sacrifices of ex-soldiers resulted in decisions that aligned baseball’s hero ethos with the cult of war heroism. Joe Harris, a first baseman for the Cleveland Indians, petitioned Landis for reinstatement to Organized Baseball in February 1922. Harris had been drafted into the military in 1918, which denied him an opportunity to build on his breakout season in 1917.³¹⁸ After the 1919 season, Harris had held out for more money, and instead of signing with Cleveland, he played on an independent-league team in Pennsylvania. When the National Commission had discovered that he played alongside ineligible athletes, they banned him from Organized Baseball.³¹⁹ Why then did Landis reinstate Harris? Had not Landis already demonstrated that he would ban anyone who associated with crooked players? *The Sporting News* provided his rationale, “The Judge makes it quite plain it is on Joe’s war record that he is restored to good standing.” He saw more than a ballplayer in Harris; he saw a veteran of the World War who earned his respect. Landis appealed to Americans to “be charitable to a fellow who has worn the service uniform of his Uncle Sam.”³²⁰ Harris had honored his civic duty

³¹⁷ “Play Fair,” Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the Izaak Walton League, October 27, 1924, Box 41, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³¹⁸ “Army Draft Nips His Career,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 64, No. 23, February 14, 1918.

³¹⁹ “Teams Wishes May Decide as to Harris,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 69, No. 11, May 20, 1920.

³²⁰ “War Record Gets A Pardon for Harris: Landis Considers it in Lifting Ban on First Sacker,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News* Vol. 72, No. 23, February 9, 1922

and spent two years sharing the same stigma as the Black Sox. But Harris, the war hero, deserved to return to America's Pastime because he offered the nation more than hits and stolen bases. If Landis wanted Organized Baseball to demonstrate a greater appreciation for the military, reinstating Harris was a step in that direction.

Landis took every opportunity to hammer home his point: anyone who did not comply with their civic responsibilities, whether they evaded conscription or did not vote, deserved scorn. "Ex-soldiers who were willing to die for their country in the World War," he lectured, "have now got to put in their time begging the civilian element to give just a few minutes to the discharge of this duty of citizenship."³²¹ He referred to non-voters as "sloths." Voting was easy. War was hard. "I have this notion about a war," he professed. "This is a popular government. We are all stockholders in it. We share its blessings and enjoy its liberties, but we must bear its burdens." How else to keep a functioning democracy? Just as men had to be ready to accept military conscription to defend the nation, every American needed to vote. He campaigned for a law that penalized men who did not vote.³²² "We must consider this whole voting question from the standpoint of the duty of the citizen," he said, "rather than his right, of which he may or may not avail himself, according to his whim. In other words, each citizen has a right that every other citizen should vote."³²³ Landis considered a fine and possible jail time for men who denied their "duty" as citizens. Such failures were not simply unpatriotic, they were unAmerican because they were unmanly. Civic-minded manhood required accepting the duties Landis believed were

³²¹ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Middletown Post, American Legion, October 16, 1924, Box 13, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³²² Address by the Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Legion, Department of South Dakota, June 8, 1920, Box 58, Folder 17, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³²³ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Colonel W.P. Moffet, November 26, 1924, Box 13, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

important to the United States. His passion to instill those values in future generations permeated everything he did. After all, what else could “fair play” possibly mean?³²⁴

Sportsmanship was the foundation of a code of behavior on the playing field that nurtured civic-minded manhood. In 1918, August Herrmann had written to Provost General Enoch Crowder urging baseball’s continuation despite the “Work or Fight” order. He claimed that the owners agreed to maintain a “high standard of sportsmanship” when they formed Organized Baseball in 1903. He identified that ideal as important to perpetuating the game as “the national pastime.³²⁵ Landis agreed. But that required more than paying lip service about sportsmanship. He believed that when someone invoked an ideal about sportsmanship, they were making claims about American character. Sportsmanship became the standard that bridged the relationship between sportsman and citizen. According to Landis, “The real sport and sportsman is the man that assures their welfare and future above all else.”³²⁶

Boys should learn sportsmanship while playing so that they could develop skills and traits crucial to building moral citizenship. After Landis became commissioner, Organized Baseball teams made concerted efforts to support youth programs that taught boys these characteristics. Landis cheered their efforts. In 1922, for example, he attended the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce’s Playground Association Youth Day at Sportsman Park.³²⁷ The

³²⁴ Allan A. Gilbert to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 18, 1924, Box 13, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³²⁵ August Herrmann to Enoch Crowder, June 15, 1918, “Work or Fight Collection,” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

³²⁶ “I’d Imprison Non-Voters, Says Landis: Fiery Judge Assails Indifference in His Speech Here,” (Milwaukee, WI), *Milwaukee Journal*, October 28, 1924, Box 41, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³²⁷ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to F.W.A. Vesper, April 7, 1922, Box 39, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

president of that association noted Landis' "keen interest in child welfare," lauding the role his presence played "to raise sufficient funds with which to continue the activities on many Playgrounds of St. Louis during the Summer months." Still, more than this, if the most powerful man in baseball was in attendance, then more people might appreciate the role that playgrounds, and sports in general, played in the life of the community and the nation.³²⁸

Landis lamented that he could not do more, and more quickly. When Walter McGuire, editor for *The American Boy*, wrote to ask what advice Landis would offer to boys who wanted to go into politics, the Judge deferred. The question as important – "If a boy's attitude toward politics is right, he will be a live-wire citizen. If it isn't, he won't" – but Landis simply had no time to provide an appropriate response.³²⁹ He also did not respond to invitations that required a public statement if he believed he did not possess the knowledge or insight asked of the request. He knew he had acquired national appeal through his actions as a federal judge, and that his tenure as commissioner enhanced his prestige, but those experiences did not make him an expert in everything. Landis used the power he had as a federal judge and commissioner to reform American society in the best way he believed he could and did no more than he wanted.

Landis had been locked in a battle to retain his judgeship as commissioner, and eventually he had to accept that his desire to reform society had its limitations.³³⁰ Ohio Congressman Benjamin Franklin Welty had demanded that Landis resign from the bench shortly after he accepted the commissionership. Welty, a lame-duck Democrat and Spanish-American

³²⁸ F.W.A. Vesper to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, April 7, 1922, Box 39, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³²⁹ Walter P. McGuire to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, March 13, 1922, Box 11, Folder 3, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³³⁰ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Walter P. McGuire, April 6, 1922, Box 11, Folder 3, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

War veteran, fired off a letter to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer questioning the legality of Landis holding both jobs; Palmer said he had no issues. Still, Welty decided to take matters into his own hands introducing legislation that barred federal judges from accepting outside salaries.³³¹ In the fall of 1921, the American Bar Association sided with Welty and formally censured Landis. They condemned the judge and claimed he undermined the dignity of the bench. On February 18, 1922, Landis submitted his letter of resignation as federal judge to President Harding, effective March 1. How many at the time considered the irony in Landis' resignation from the bench? The man asked to clean up baseball's corruption had been accused of corruption himself. If the loss of his judgeship stung, Landis rallied back knowing he had the public on his side.³³²

Once news of Landis' resignation reached the public, letters of support poured in. "There has never been a period in my lifetime," private citizen W.G. Bierd wrote, "when men such as yourself were so essential to the safety and well being of this country." He expressed confidence that Landis would continue to carry out "high and cherished motives and thus still serve the people."³³³ Landis' resignation was a loss to the bench, according to Attorney Donald R. Richberg, but the nation still benefited from his influence as commissioner.³³⁴ Attorney John Lamoret praised Landis for his Americanism.³³⁵ "As citizens," wrote Howard J. Betty, president

³³¹ Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury*), 197.

³³² *Ibid*, 206-208.

³³³ W.G. Bierd to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 18, 1922, Box 66, Folder 5, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³³⁴ Donald R. Richberg, to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 20, 1922, Box 66, Folder 5, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³³⁵ John Lamoret to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 21, 1922, Box 66, Folder 5, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

of the Chicago Chapter of the American Legion, “we will keenly feel the loss to the judiciary because your services in this respect have been of such high character and have so resounded with Americanism and sense of fair play and justice.” Betty’s acknowledgment of the characteristics Landis embodied, especially “fair play,” also reflected the ideals the American Legion promoted. As a proud Legionnaire, Betty equated Landis’ job as providing the nation with a vital service.³³⁶

The American Legion formed in 1919, and Landis prided himself in supporting any organization that helped veterans of the World War. He also understood that if he wanted future generations to embrace the possibility of military conscription, he had to support efforts that honored veterans. According to one of its founders, Colonel Henry D. Lindsley, the American Legion served to ensure that “the principles of justice, freedom and democracy, for which our country fought in the world war, may more completely direct the daily lives of America’s manhood.” Lindley explained that the American Legion endorsed the idea that “the supreme obligation of the citizen is to the state,” and those who accepted that obligation helped to win the great war, and “gave a rebirth to national patriotism and national faith.” The main goal of the Legion was to ensure that the “renaissance of national patriotism, born of national suffering and national self-sacrifice, must not die.” Lindley described the Legion as apolitical, but that it would work to influence policies supporting those who fought.³³⁷ Landis made his support for the American Legion well known. “After long days of tedious work in the court,” the *Illustrated World* noted, “this patriotic judge boarded night trains to distant cities to talk on patriotism, on

³³⁶ Howard J. Betty to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 21, 1922, Box 66, Folder 7, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³³⁷ “American Legion,” (Nashville, TN), *Nashville Tennessean*, September 24, 1919.

our duty to our country, and to help the boys in any way that he could.” Landis claimed that one of the proudest moments of his life was when he naturalized eight hundred drafted men at Camp Grant. Landis developed a strong relationship with the Legion through his campaign to support the needs of ex-soldiers and honor their service. The Legion and Landis agreed that American boys needed to learn how to be civic-minded men. That required teaching ideals like fair play: the foundation of “sportsmanship,” which inculcated good citizenship.³³⁸

Landis demanded that Americans support the needs of veterans because they had “save[d] our own hides,” and protected American sovereignty.³³⁹ Two months he began his tenure as commissioner, Landis appeared before the Wisconsin state legislature to argue on behalf of the Legion to meet the needs of disabled veterans. “There is a question that we have to meet and solve,” he told the legislators. He called on them to ensure that justice prevail “in respect to the great fundamental problem that arises from the thing that always follows a great war – that is, the treatment of the survivors of the war; they who bore the real brunt and burden of the war – the maimed and broken victims of the war.” Even the poorest of economies had found ways to compensate the men who lived with the scars of war. “Great strong men; leaders on the field of battle! The man who went over those fields – shell-torn fields – and conquered men and many men, and with his bear [sic] hands fought machine gun nests, - stricken down with tubercular germs! I have sat by the bedsides of these men in hospitals. We have yet to do our duty.”³⁴⁰ Landis spent the remainder of 1922 following through on his promises to support

³³⁸ William Fleming French, “Kenesaw Mountain Landis: The Most Interesting Man in America,” *Illustrated World*, March, 1922, Box 4, Folder 15, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³³⁹ Honorable Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the American Protective League of Minneapolis, January 31, 1920, Box 58, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴⁰ Kenesaw Mountain Landis before the Wisconsin State Legislature, March 2, 1921, Box 58, Folder 9, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

the men who served the nation during the war and to oversee the development of those who would be the men of tomorrow.

Legionnaires wrote to Landis to express their appreciation for his commitment. Harry P. Pringle attended one of Landis' talks before his local Legion but was too shy to approach him afterward. "There are no doubt millions in this country who feel as I do regarding you," Pringle explained. "You are fair and square, fearless and impartial, an excellent sportsman, a man with a reverence for the democratic traditions of our glorious country, the beacon-light of this globe; a man of natural and spontaneous patriotic fervor, sincere, human, likeable, temperamental, individualist." Veteran Pringle thanked Landis for his service to America. He reassured Landis that the job of baseball commissioner was important:

"Had Germany had baseball and the spirit that it engenders, it is not likely that the people would have been led astray by monarchistic [sic] ambitions. For your sake and the sake of your loved ones, and for the sake of the great good that baseball does as a natural outlet for human nature, I am glad that you are to give your entire time and ability to that field, as well as the Legion."³⁴¹

As the son of a veteran, the father of a veteran, and as a man who wanted to serve his country as well, Landis could take pride in the letters from ex-soldiers. Perhaps letters like these allowed Landis to move past his career as a federal judge and embrace the commissionership as his sole profession.

In October 1922, Commissioner Landis came to New York City as the keynote speaker at the American Legion's Fourth Annual Convention.³⁴² Landis used the opportunity to express his support for a war bonus. After the war, Congress debated whether ex-soldiers deserved

³⁴¹ Harry P. Pringle to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 19, 1922, Box 66, Folder 5, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴² T. Semmes Walmsley to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, September 16, 1922, Box 39, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

additional compensation for their service. The topic proved divisive even for the Legion. Opponents suggested that a war bonus would reduce American servicemen to mercenaries.³⁴³ Supporters of the bonus, like Landis, believed that men deserved greater compensation for their sacrifice. "I know a good deal what happened on the other side," Landis announced, "I am on your staff for life." He argued that the men who enlisted demonstrated their patriotism by not asking for anything in return. Yet, those same men returned home with "shellshock," and Americans had to remain committed to supporting veterans because, "Ten years from now, five years from now, fifteen years from now, men in perfect health today apparently will begin to show the effect of some kind of unimaginable thing contracted in the service."³⁴⁴ Landis understood, perhaps recalling his father's experience, that the effects of the war might not manifest until much later, and so he did not want the nation to forget about the sacrifices veterans made.

Landis ensured that Organized Baseball would do its part to support ex-soldiers. Game Two of the 1922 World Series between the New York Yankees and New York Giants ended in a 3-3 tie after ten innings, having been called due to darkness. The series required an odd number of games to declare a winner and that opened the possibility for an additional game to be played. Landis ordered the league to donate revenue from the tie game to the Disabled American Veterans of the World War.³⁴⁵ At times, Landis felt like he was the only one who worked to honor the sacrifices of ex-soldiers. In a letter he sent to a friend in December of 1922, he

³⁴³ "Legion Takes Stand for New Bonus Fight," (New York, NY), *New York Times*, October 18, 1922.

³⁴⁴ Address of Kenesaw Mountain Landis before Fourth Annual Convention of the American Legion, New York, NY, September 22, 1922, Box 58, Folder 10, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴⁵ "Report of the Disabled American Veterans of the World War," Box 70, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

confided "I am reminded every hour of every day of the human race's betrayal of the memory of the fellows that did the big job from '14 to '19."³⁴⁶ Did the men in charge of the country forget the meaning of sacrifice? Perhaps the reason he valued his job as commissioner was because he saw the opportunity to influence the next generation of Americans to be more patriotic.

Landis continued to do his part. He wrote to the service officers at Legion offices around the country to help ex-soldiers receive the aid they requested.³⁴⁷ Robert B. Harkness, the Director of Welfare in the American Legion, wrote to thank him for helping Private Clyde E. Griffith receive his compensation. "I am very glad to say to you that the claim was put in proper shape and presented by our State Welfare Department and promptly and favorably acted upon by the Veterans' Bureau."³⁴⁸ Landis' efforts received notice from the National Vice Commander of the American Legion, Edward Barrett. He wrote to Landis in February of 1923 to commend him for his support.³⁴⁹ Landis saw a great opportunity to attach baseball to his mission to support veterans when the American Legion launched its Junior Baseball program.

Frank McCormick, the athletic director of the University of Minnesota, conceived of the idea of a youth baseball program hosted by Legions all across the country. After the American Legion Junior Baseball's inaugural season in 1925, program proliferated.³⁵⁰ Connie Mack, the

³⁴⁶ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Frank W. Morse, December 1, 1922, Box 5, Folder 1-A, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴⁷ J.F. Burns to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, January 23, 1923, Box 12, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴⁸ Robert B. Harkness to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 19, 1923, Box 12, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁴⁹ Edward Barrett to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, February 5, 1923, Box 12, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁵⁰ J.G. Taylor Spink, "Looping the Loop," *The Sporting News, Junior Baseball Edition*, (St. Louis, MO), April, 1947, Sporting News Junior Baseball Collection, Box 43, Folder 2, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

coach of the Philadelphia Athletics, oversaw the Pennsylvania chapter of the Junior Baseball program. Mack wore a suit to every game, setting him apart from the managers who wore a baseball uniform. He claimed that he never drank or swore because of a promise he had made to his mother. He supported Landis' campaign to establish a moral standard among professional baseball players. He believed that baseball could teach ethical behavior through the refined hero ethos and Legion Baseball.³⁵¹ "Our American Legionnaires and the members of all our veterans' associations," he declared, "have helped to make our national game an exemplification of the true American spirit." He noted that Legion Baseball aimed to build good citizenships by "utilizing baseball as a powerful factor in the social, moral, and economic development of the younger generation." Through the work of Landis and Mack, Organized Baseball promoted the Legion's Junior Baseball program as a civic betterment enterprise.³⁵²

Landis explained that "good sportsmanship" was the "mightiest word combination in our vocabulary. He asserted that it was born on the fields of play and was synonymous with "manly achievement, generous rivalry, and fidelity to fair play." If the frontier had made a previous generation of Americans exceptional, Landis promoted sportsmanship as the modern process to achieve exceptionalism. "Everywhere in this country, White House or hovel," he announced, "it means the same, because Americans, whatever their origin, have learned how to play. It's my conviction that without this characteristic, which I trace direct to the playing of competitive games, a nation is apt to have a virus in its blood which will poison its people's minds and

³⁵¹ Connie Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues: The Great Story of American's National Game*, (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1950), 136.

³⁵² *Ibid*, 158.

morals and cause them to practice subterfuge and dishonesty in their international or internal affairs.”³⁵³

All Junior club members had to memorize and recite the “Code of Sportsmanship” before each game. That code emphasized respect for the rules and for the opponent, and reminded players to keep a “sound soul, clean mind, and a healthy body.”³⁵⁴ John L. Griffith, Commissioner of the Big Ten Athletic Conference, promoted the American Legion’s Junior Baseball Program. “When a true sportsman loses or fails to succeed,” Griffith declared, “he doesn’t blame society or the government and turn bolshevist, but he takes off his coat and fights a little bit harder to win.” He reinforced a belief that sportsmanship developed a unique character in Americans that made them more prepared to respond to challenges. Griffith acknowledged that, in some way, sportsmanship was the trait that made Americans exceptional. It was vital to the life of the American spirit. Griffith allied with Landis in the campaign to implement sportsmanship at all levels of athletics.³⁵⁵

At the conclusion of the 1926 baseball season, National League President John Heydler announced that the league had set a new attendance record. Five years of Commissioner Landis had increased revenue for the league, and profits for the owners. With Landis’ contract set to expire at the conclusion of the 1927 season, the owners took time from counting their money to extend his tenure as commissioner for another seven years.³⁵⁶ The secretary to the president of the International League, William J. Manley, congratulated Landis on his reelection, “Gosh how

³⁵³ Unidentified Article, Undated, Box 58, Folder 22, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁵⁴ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 159.

³⁵⁵ Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, 120.

³⁵⁶ “N.L. Appoints Committee to Assist Landis,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1926.

we ex-soldiers love a fighter. As one of baseball's own who left the office of Mr. Heydler to go over to France and Germany, I salute you." Manley thanked Landis for his work with the American Legion and the nation's wounded veterans, "What you have done for them reflects great credit on organized baseball in many ways."³⁵⁷ Landis had countless admirers, and when they expressed gratitude for his service, they could not separate his work as commissioner from his work with the Legion. As Reverend Martin D. Brennan acknowledged, his work had also "done untold good for the youth, and yes, for the manhood of America. It is an honest, inspiring, wholesome sport. It is to men like you, dear Judge, that we are indebted for its wholesomeness, integrity, popularity, and success."³⁵⁸

During the National League's fiftieth anniversary celebration, A.G. Mills applauded the "patriotic" founders of the league and cheered the current leaders of Organized Baseball who "exerted...a powerful influence in promoting the moral and physical betterment of the youth of the Country." Mills believed that in baseball:

"the boy finds to become proficient in this sport he must lead a temperate, cleanly life, and what is more difficult, he must learn to subject himself to discipline so essential to individual efficiency and indispensable to effective team work. But the small boy is not the only beneficiary. Our soldiers, at home and abroad, and thousands of our young men from every business pursuit, have adopted base ball as their favorite sport."³⁵⁹

The way that Mills described baseball was not much different than the way the game's promoters depicted the sport before the World War. However, Mills and others could speak with a greater

³⁵⁷ William J. Manley to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 17, 1926, Box 5, Folder 6, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁵⁸ Reverend Martin D. Brennan to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 20, 1926, Box 5, Folder 6, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁵⁹ A.G. Mills, "Baseball," Speech before Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner, February 2, 1926, Box 2, Folder 6, A.G. Mills Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

sense of conviction because Landis' work had convinced Americans that baseball actually served as a vital cultural institution. Over the years Landis received numerous letters that thanked him for returning baseball to a respected place in America. His work with the American Legion and promoting "sportsmanship" combined to reconstruct baseball's cultural significance.

On October 7, 1925, the death of Christy Mathewson, star pitcher and World War veteran, brought together the realms of baseball and war. The Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) honored him as "typifying all the finest ideals of American sportsmanship and being an inspiration to the youth of the nation...by his patriotism as a citizen in time of war and by his sterling character as a man, reflected great and lasting credit on baseball."³⁶⁰ Bucknell College, Mathewson's alma mater, described him as an "idol of American manhood, young and old." Mathewson embodied the traits Landis looked to inculcate in every American. Described as a "gentlemen, sportsman and soldier," Mathewson was a civic-minded man, representing the type baseball hero worth honoring. The *Bucknell Alumni Monthly* described him as "a national symbol of the clean aspirations of the sports world." After his death, Bucknell established the Christy Mathewson Memorial Foundation. Landis proudly served as a board member.³⁶¹

Landis jumped at any opportunity to promote war-veteran ballplayers. He used their celebrity status as sports stars to refine the image of professional ballplayers as civic-minded men. However, when Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb resigned from their managerial positions in November 1926, Landis had to confront the competing standards of moral and immoral behavior that he wanted baseball to teach. Cobb and Speaker said they wanted to retire from their baseball

³⁶⁰ James M. Gould to Jane S. Mathewson, 1925, "Christy Mathewson Collection," National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

³⁶¹ "Christy Mathewson," *Bucknell Alumni Monthly*, Vol. X, No. 2, November 1925, Christy Mathewson Papers, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

careers. A month later the news broke that they had thrown a game in 1919. According to a former pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, Hubert B. “Dutch” Leonard, he had arranged with Cobb, Speaker, and Joe Wood, to help Detroit win a game against Cleveland on September 25, 1919. Leonard recalled that they had agreed to place money on the game since they were staging the outcome. He had wagered \$1500, Cobb \$2000, and Wood and Speaker \$1000 each. He said that “there was just the four of us there, and no other player was in on it.” The box score revealed that Detroit had won, and Cleveland committed three errors in the process.³⁶²

Leonard turned over the most damning piece of evidence to Landis, a letter written by Cobb that discussed money placed on that game. Landis requested that all the men implicated in the scandal appear before him for cross examination. Leonard refused out of fear that Cobb would enact retribution for implicating him. Speaker denied any wrongdoing. Despite admitting that he wrote the letter, Cobb said he was innocent. He said that he had never wagered on the game, but that he acted as an intermediary for those who wished to put money down.³⁶³ Landis found himself in a delicate situation. He had incriminating evidence on Cobb. Yet, if he accepted Cobb’s story and did nothing, he would have to rectify that decision with his move to ban Buck Weaver for life for the same excuse. He had told Weaver in 1921 that, “no player that sits in a conference with a bunch of crooked players and gamblers where the ways and means of throwing games are planned and discussed, and does not promptly tell his club about it, will ever play professional baseball.”³⁶⁴ If Landis intended to stick by his standard, he had only one choice: to permanently ban baseball’s greatest player.

³⁶² Testimony of Hubert B. “Dutch” Leonard, “Cobb-Speaker Incident,” December 20, 1926, “Cobb/Speaker Incident,” Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

³⁶³ Spink, *Judge Landis*, 171.

³⁶⁴ “Weaver to Sue Chicago For Suspended Salary,” (Baltimore, MD), *The Baltimore Sun*, August 4, 1921.

While Landis waited to render a decision, others weighed in. The president of the Minneapolis Base Ball and Athletic Association said, “I think it is indeed fortunate that we have a man on the job who is absolutely fearless in order to help baseball weather the storm which now confronts us.” He expressed disgust that Cobb and Speaker had lowered themselves “due largely to a greed for money and such things.” He reassured Landis that no matter what he decided, baseball had already reclaimed its place as “an honest, legitimate sport.”³⁶⁵ Edward W. Cady, Jr., a board member on the Christy Mathewson Memorial Foundation, reminded Landis that his pristine reputation made it impossible for anyone to question his decision. Landis had become baseball itself in the minds of some fans making his every decision good for the sport.³⁶⁶

Support for Cobb and Speaker also arrived on Landis’ desk. The City Council of Cleveland passed a resolution stating that Tris Speaker was “amongst the most distinguished citizens, beloved by all, and an inspiration to the youth of this nation.”³⁶⁷ What went through Landis’ mind as he contemplated the fate of extremely popular baseball players who were also veterans of the World War? Was there a path to preserve his integrity and uphold the image of the heroic ballplayer he believed reinforced the ideals of civic-minded manhood?

On January 12, 1927, Landis made his ruling: “These players have not been, nor are they now, found guilty of fixing a ball game. By no decent system of justice could such a finding be made.” What made the Cobb and Speaker case different than Weaver’s? While Weaver had evaded conscription during the World War, Speaker had enlisted in the Navy and Cobb had

³⁶⁵ Geo K. Belden to Kensesaw Mountain Landis, December 22, 1926, Box 5, Folder 6, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁶⁶ Edward W. Cady, Jr. to Kensesaw Mountain Landis, December 27, 1926, Box 5, Folder 6, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁶⁷ Frank W. Thomas, Clerk of Council, City of Cleveland, “Tris Speaker Resolution,” January 10, 1927, “Cobb/Speaker Incident,” Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

joined the Chemical War Service, both claiming it was their “patriotic duty.”³⁶⁸ In Landis’ every situation presented only two categories of men. During the war, a man was either “pro-American” or “pro-German.” A man was either an “Americanist” or a “Bolshevist.” A man was either loyal or a subversive. Cobb and Speaker had proven their loyalty, meaning their account of the story had to be true. Had Landis kicked Cobb and Speaker out of baseball, he would have sent a message to the “men of tomorrow” that military service was not the greatest test of a man’s worth.³⁶⁹ Even if Cobb and Speaker had fixed the game, they were war heroes. Their military service nullified their infraction just as Abraham Landis’ sacrifice during the Civil War allowed him to enjoy whiskey despite preaching about the evils of alcohol. After his ruling, Landis imposed a statute of limitations on all “criminal offenses” in baseball. Ballplayers could not be tried for offenses that took place before he was commissioner.³⁷⁰

A more positive development for baseball was the continued success of American Legion’s Junior Baseball program. By 1928, with the help of \$50,000 from Organized Baseball, the Junior World Series had grown to include every state in America.³⁷¹ Even though the Legion implemented a highly competitive end-of-the-season world series, the program’s goals remained constant with the “Code of Sportsmanship.” In yearly advertisements about the league, the Legion emphasized that its purpose was not to build championship baseball clubs, but to ensure that “every player can win that which is of more importance – the spirit of fair play, loyalty,

³⁶⁸ Al Stump, *Cobb: A Biography*, (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1994), 275.

³⁶⁹ Landis rarely had to confront fallacies in his worldview in which war was a confirmation of a man’s virtuous character. He often blamed the psychological effects of the war for any criminal acts a veteran committed after the war.

³⁷⁰ Spink, *Judge Landis*, 172.

³⁷¹ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 160.

teamwork, obedience, gameness and democracy.”³⁷² According to Connie Mack the American Legion’s baseball program helped boys learn the “American way in sportsmanship and citizenship.”³⁷³ Sometimes, the greatest victories could not be tallied in a box score.

Landis expressed his confidence in the Legion’s baseball program, and all athletic programs that emphasized sportsmanship. “Millions of our young men have played [baseball],” Landis declared, “and the spirit of sportsmanship it inculcates as well as the physical and mental alertness it develops have been no small factor in promoting good citizenship.”³⁷⁴ The letters he received from Americans that discussed the importance of baseball to the nation acted as “proof” that he had succeeded at promoting civic-minded manhood.

Landis believed that “character” encompassed something very specific, very patriotic, and uniquely American. The late Christy Mathewson was a living embodiment of those ideals and the type of ballplayer Landis wanted to promote. In January of 1934, he received a letter from one of the men he had cast out of baseball. “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, one of the Black Sox, asked to be reinstated in baseball. Jackson was forty-seven and too old to play, but he wanted to manage a local minor league team near his hometown of Greenville, South Carolina. Landis wasted no time returning his answer:

“With reference to the suggestion that, if reinstated, the applicant can or will participate in minor league activities (and not in the major leagues,) of course there are not, and cannot, be two standards of eligibility – one for the major leagues and another (and lower) one for the minors. The game played in a small town in a Class

³⁷² “Enroll Baseball Players Before It’s Too Late,” *The Huddle*, National Americanism Commission of the American Legion, Vol. 7, No. 5, May 1934, Box 21, Folder 3, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁷³ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 165.

³⁷⁴ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to John L. Griffith, May 14, 1928, Box 15, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

D league is no less important to the spectators and players than is the game played at the large city in the highest class league.”³⁷⁵

Landis realized that his decisions regarding baseball could not be performed without considering the broader implications they would have on the character of the nation. When leading reformers and intellectuals referred to baseball as the National Game, they suggested that it was the sport most capable of instilling the traits they promoted as critical for full participation in American democracy. Through baseball, Landis and other influential leaders and reformers, embarked to develop citizens willing to, and capable of, taking on all the obligations and responsibilities asked of them by their government.

A return to baseball would have helped to rehabilitate Jackson’s image as well. Landis wanted no part in that process. The disabled veteran could not get back the leg he lost in the war. No amount of rehabilitation could give back a man’s innocence that was taken from him in the trenches. A man’s actions determined his legacy. Men who had honored their civic duty had to carry the visible and hidden scars of the World War and the least the nation could do was honor them for their decision to defend liberty. Jackson had to live with his choices to throw the series and dodge military conscription. Landis wanted to keep baseball’s image pure and that meant refusing to help a man who chose to reject his civic duty, and his honor along with it.

³⁷⁵ Paul Mickelson, “Landis Rebukes ‘Shoeless’ Joe,” (Los Angeles, CA), *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1934.

CHAPTER 6. USING FIGURES, TABLES, AND LANDSCAPE PAGES

On October 2, 1935, the Chicago Cubs and Detroit Tigers met at Navin Field to play Game One of the World Series. The Tigers expected 50,000 fans to cram the stadium for the Fall Classic.³⁷⁶ Among those in attendance was Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis. He had traveled to Detroit to take in the opening game, but that was not the only reason for his trip. That evening, Landis met with the superintendent of Detroit's public schools, who escorted him to the entrance of WWJ, a local radio station. He came at the request of Belmont Farley, a member of the National Education Association who had asked Landis to appear on a National Broadcasting Company program called "Our American Schools." Farley wanted Landis to discuss "good sportsmanship as an objective of school athletics."³⁷⁷ High school athletics proliferated throughout the 1920s after both Democratic and Republican parties adopted physical education as a plank in their platforms to mold the character of America's youth.³⁷⁸ By the 1930s, educators accepted extracurricular activities, including school sports, as an effective means to inculcate the kinds of attitudes and behaviors associated with virtuous citizenship. Reformers promoted "team play" or "sportsmanship" as a moral force that prepared young Americans for the responsibilities many assumed were essential to keeping a democratic society functioning.³⁷⁹

Landis' tireless efforts as commissioner to reconstruct baseball's image had earned him the respect of leading educators to speak about sportsmanship as an essential goal of the entire

³⁷⁶ "Play Ball! Classic Begins," (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 2, 1935.

³⁷⁷ Belmont Farley to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, September 27, 1935, Box 22, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁷⁸ Timothy P. O'Hanlon, "School Sports as Social Training: The Case of Athletics and the Crisis of World War I," in *Sport in America: From Wicked Amusement to National Obsession*, ed. David K. Wiggins, (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1995), 202.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 193.

nation. At seven-thirty p.m. Eastern Time, Landis' voice went over the airwaves and entered the homes of Americans all across the country. "This universal participation in our national sport," he proclaimed, "a sport developed by Americans for American needs – has left its mark on the capacity and the character of American manhood." Landis spoke for over four minutes explaining why team sports were more important to the nation than solitary physical activity. Anyone could exercise alone with their eyes closed, he argued, but team sports, especially baseball, developed both the mind and body. Landis asserted that baseball taught boys to remain "level-headed" and "cool." He declared that "physical and mental powers in harmonious cooperation" were the combination needed to produce robust individuals better equipped to take on the obligations of citizenship. He lauded schools that offered team sports because they "have taken an important step toward the education and real development of the 'whole man.'" He ended with a reminder: "The American people can have pride in the fact that their national game exemplifies the very highest ideals of good sportsmanship."³⁸⁰ Landis made his closing remark with the utmost confidence that no one within baseball could have made fifteen years earlier. But he was the one had overseen the reconstruction of Organized Baseball's hero ethos to ensure that ballplayers modeled the characteristics of good sportsmanship. Still, even Landis may not have predicted that he would become a powerful ally for public education.

The NEA's request for Landis to appear on "Our American Schools," represented the culmination of his vision as commissioner that he articulated in 1921. "What is there more important to the country than giving proper direction to the conduct of the ideals of boyhood – the youths who will be the men of tomorrow?"³⁸¹ He understood that a powerful bond existed

³⁸⁰ "Sportsmanship," Radio Address by Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 2, 1935, Box 22, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁸¹ Edgar G. Brands, "The Life Story of Kenesaw Mountain Landis," *The Sporting News Baseball Guide and Record*

between fans and their favorite players, “The heart of many a player...is warmed by the fact that he is the idol of boys who see in their hero what they themselves hope to achieve in the spirit of fair play.” He also knew that he had the power to ensure the player-fan relationship served a purpose for America. Landis believed that the “proper direction” for boys in America was a path that inculcated civic-minded manhood, and he wanted baseball as part of that process.³⁸²

A teacher and coach from Brooklyn, New York, Harold “Cy” Seymour, heard Landis’ radio address and felt compelled to write a letter of support. Seymour acknowledged that Landis presented “very clearly and adequately a sound philosophy of baseball and sport in general as beneficial...to American life.”³⁸³ Seymour received acknowledgment in Landis’ speech about the important role he played as an educator and coach in constructing good citizens.

The success of high school athletics depended on the work of men like Landis and Seymour. When the most powerful man in American sports spoke about the validity of sportsmanship, he legitimized its importance and provided a greater sense of purpose to men like Seymour who implemented the program’s goals. Seymour took comfort that as a baseball coach he not only equipped his players with athletic skills, but also helped to inculcate principles of virtuous citizenship rooted in sportsmanship. Connie Mack, the renowned baseball coach, also articulated the vital role that teachers and coaches played to promoting sportsmanship, “Our schools are the bulwark of our nation; they are the training grounds for the manhood of the future. In the high

Book, (St. Louis: Sporting News Publishing Company, 1945), 113.

³⁸² “Sportsmanship,” Radio Address by Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 2, 1935, Box 22, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁸³ Harold “Cy” Seymour to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, October 3, 1935, Box 22, Folder 2, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

schools throughout our country there are baseball teams that are helping youth of our towns and cities to acquire strength and character through good sportsmanship.”³⁸⁴

Sportsmanship helped to strengthen American identity, John L. Griffith maintained, because it suppressed the spread of corrosive ideologies. Athletes were not, “members of Communist Youth Societies,” he asserted. “They do not march in the Pacifist parades, and they do believe in a competitive system. They will fight among themselves but as a group they will unite and fight against any enemy that tries to subvert our American system.” The goals that sportsmanship served benefited the country, Griffith explained, and Landis agreed. Both held that the construction of good citizenship relied on civic-minded manhood. That required a consistent message across multiple institutions and programs. The behaviors had to be reinforced at every stage of development, both internally, through the work of teachers and coaches, and externally, through the construction of a hero ethos in baseball under Landis’ direction. The intersection of American institutions reinforced sportsmanship as a fixture in the lives of America’s youth.³⁸⁵

Across the 1930s, veterans of the World War continued to send Landis notes expressing their appreciation for his efforts to reward them for their service. A 1935, a telegram from veteran Andrew Morgan thanked Landis for helping him win compensation for a war-related disability. In gratitude, Morgan had named his firstborn son, “Kenesaw Mountain Morgan.”³⁸⁶ Landis’ work with disabled veterans earned wide acclaim, and in 1929, the American Legion awarded him its highest civilian honor. Since the Legion’s founding, Landis had been involved

³⁸⁴ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 168.

³⁸⁵ John L. Griffith to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, July 7, 1939, Box 25, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁸⁶ Andrew Morgan to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, November 8, 1935, Box 22, Folder 3, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

with “its legislative program, in its endowment fund campaign to aid our disabled comrades and the orphans of the war, and in its Americanism programs. National Commander Paul V. McNutt noted Landis’ “devotion to the defenders of our nation,” declaring that his support of Legion ideals and endeavors, “have been invaluable and a great public service to America.”³⁸⁷ Landis invested himself in the causes he believed were important to America. He had received recognition for that work from the NEA and American Legion, making his role as commissioner a success beyond the stadiums of Organized Baseball.

However, in 1935, the power to define a baseball player’s character expanded to include the Baseball Writers’ Association of America. The BBWAA formed after the 1908 World Series when baseball writers were not allowed in the press box to cover the game. They organized to pressure the owners to provide adequate space for media members to cover ballgames.³⁸⁸ In August, National League president Ford Frick met with a representative of Cooperstown, New York, Arthur Cleland, to discuss the creation of a hall of fame for baseball players. The site of the hall would be in Cooperstown, the location where the Mills Report claimed Aber Doubleday had invented the sport. Baseball’s origin story allowed the sport’s promoters to portray it as uniquely American. A native born American, and a Civil War hero to boot, had invented the game in a small, rural village in upstate New York. That story reminded Americans of simpler times when Americans were still unaffected by the unpleasant consequences of industrialization and urbanization. For those who worked to create the Hall of Fame, placing it in Cooperstown was important to keep baseball’s present and future connected to its past.

³⁸⁷ Paul V. McNutt, “The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award to Kenesaw Mountain Landis,” July 20, 1929, Box 16, Folder 4, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

³⁸⁸ “Baseball Writers Organize,” (New York, NY), New York Times, October 15, 1908.

Only the game's best and those most worthy would find a place here. The induction process would consist of two parts. The Baseball Writers' Association of America would vote on ten players whose careers spanned the decades after 1900, and a committee of influential baseball men, including Landis, would select those who played before 1900.³⁸⁹ Henry P. Edwards, secretary of the BBWAA, oversaw the voting process. Any player who received at least seventy-five percent of the total votes cast would be enshrined in the Hall.³⁹⁰

In December, Edwards sent ballots to every member of the BBWAA asking that they list the top ten players who deserved induction. Some writers seemed perplexed with the voting process as *The Sporting News* noted. "Fifty-eight of the ballots in the Hall of Fame poll of the scribes were returned by Henry P. Edwards, secretary of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, because they showed all-star teams instead of naming ten players, regardless of position." A few writers claimed that they "wanted to pick them that way."³⁹¹ When the 226 ballots were ultimately counted, five men received seventy-five percent of the votes required. Ty Cobb earned the most with 222, Babe Ruth and Honus Wagner were second with 215, Christy Mathewson garnered 205, and last was Walter Johnson, appearing on 189 ballots. The *Austin Statesman* captured the moment: there was no doubt that "these five merited places in the memorial hall," but Edwards and others counting the votes were shocked to find that Cobb and Ruth did not receive unanimous selection.³⁹² Journalist John Kieran suggested in a *New York Times* piece that some of the older writers may not have voted for Cobb or Ruth because they

³⁸⁹ "Hall of Fame at Cooperstown," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 100, No.1, August 22, 1935.

³⁹⁰ "Creating Baseball Hall of Fame," (Hartford, CT), *Hartford Courant*, December 26, 1935.

³⁹¹ "In the Press Box," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 100, No. 23, January 23, 1936.

³⁹² "Five 'Moderns' in Hall of Fame," (Austin, TX), *The Austin Statesman*, February 3, 1936.

“may have failed in the character test.” Despite no explicit instructions requiring writers to account for character, it seems that at least some writers may have considered it when they voted.³⁹³

Indeed, the writers did not receive much guidance for voting at all. A letter to the *New York Times* even argued that “real fame” should not necessarily rely on player statistics but could come in the form of the influence a player could might have on literature. That writer remembered “a player named Kelly, who inspired the greatest baseball poem ever written, even though in it his name was changed to Casey. And if that doesn’t make him famous, what could?”³⁹⁴ “Kelly” referred to Mike “King” Kelly, the alleged inspiration for Eric Thayer’s iconic poem, “Casey at the Bat.” But that fellow’s fame was summed up in an episode of prideful failure. Still, the case to consider player worthy of the Hall of Fame based solely on a depiction in a poem revealed that the guidelines for who could and could not be inducted were open to debate. Baseball writers did not have any requirement that prevented them from basing their vote on statistics, good looks, or something immeasurable, like character.³⁹⁵

That was why a campaign to elect former pitcher Dickie Kerr emerged almost immediately after the Hall of Fame announced its inaugural class. Those who supported his inclusion based it solely on the two wins her earned for the Chicago White Sox during the 1919 World Series. The Kerr campaign required baseball writers and fans to look beyond his career statistics and focus on what his World Series performance represented for the sport amidst the infamous Black Sox scandal. *The Sporting News* presented a telling case for Kerr:

³⁹³ John Kieran, “Sports of the Times: A Probe of the Baseball Balloting,” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, February 6, 1936.

³⁹⁴ W.G.B. “Letters to the Sports Editor: What is Baseball Fame?” (New York, NY), *New York Times*, February 15, 1936.

³⁹⁵ Kat Eschner, “‘Casey at the Bat Leaves’ a Lot of Unanswered Questions,” *Smithsonian Magazine*.

“No basis has been established as to what constitutes eligibility for candidates to the Hall of Fame. However, if there is a place for one whose playing record was not in the forefront, but whose devotion to the game was immeasurable. Dickie probably did more to earn the respect of the fans and enhance the reputation of the national pastime than any other individual connected with that or any other series.”³⁹⁶

Certainly, there were fans who loved Kerr. But the case for Kerr went farther representing him as the “incorruptible” hero in a tragic tale of deceit and betrayal. Oswin K. King, who published *Uncle Jake Sports News* in Dallas, Texas, jumped on the Kerr bandwagon. “The only reward Kerr ever received,” King argued, “was the knowledge that he went straight and was honest. Certainly, he deserves a place in the Hall of Fame.”³⁹⁷ King and others who wanted Kerr immortalized in Cooperstown did not want the baseball writers to compare his career statistics to the five men who had already been inducted. Although Kerr did not receive enough votes for induction, his character focused campaign made an important argument. Hitting, running, and pitching perhaps were not the sum of greatness in a baseball player. Landis did not endorse Kerr for the Hall of Fame, but he would campaign for another player whose claim to baseball immortality relied more on his actions on the battlefield than on the ballfield. The importance of military service resurfaced when the United States entered the Second World War and patriotic fervor once gripped the nation.

The United States strove to stay out of the fighting when the Second World War erupted in Asia and Europe in the 1930s. Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, however, ended that. For baseball, all-out mobilization brought back memories of the First World War. On January 10, 1942, the president of the Pacific Coast League wrote Landis

³⁹⁶ “A Nomination for the Hall of Fame,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 102, No. 20, December 31, 1936.

³⁹⁷ “Joins Boosters of Kerr,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 102, No. 26, February 11, 1937.

worried that if the league played the upcoming season fans would stop showing up for games. Nobody wanted to see the players labeled as “slackers.”³⁹⁸ Certainly, Landis did not want Organized Baseball to repeat the mistakes of 1917 and ’18. That would make a mockery of all he had said and done as commissioner. If ballplayers were symbols of heroism, he did not want them to carry the label of “slacker.” This was an opportunity for Organized Baseball to lead the way. “If there was any professional baseball in America during this war,” Landis declared, “that there wasn’t going to be any exception of any kind in favor of that activity.” He assured the nation that if baseball continued during the war that no player on the field was afforded any preferential treatment. All ballplayers would be subject to “the general law of the land.”³⁹⁹

On January 14, 1942, Landis fired off a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt to ensure that Organized Baseball would not be blindsided by any government orders and to remain a man of his conviction. He asked if he should discourage the owners and players from playing in the upcoming season.⁴⁰⁰ The nation would need a distraction from the war, Roosevelt responded, and baseball would help in that effort. Landis’ career as commissioner was rooted in the belief that baseball was far more than a leisurely “distraction,” but replied with “grateful appreciation” for the president’s “green light” hoped that “our performance will justify your action.”⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ W.C. Tuttle to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, January 10, 1942, “Correspondence Collection,” Box 13, Folder 3, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

³⁹⁹ Kenesaw Mountain Landis before Graduation Ceremony of Naval Training Station, August 9, 1943, Box 47, Folder 19, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

⁴⁰⁰ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 14, 1942, “Correspondence Collection,” Box 13, Folder 3, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁰¹ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 16, 1942, “Correspondence Collection,” Box 1, Folder 46, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

Upon hearing the news, baseball writer Sid Keener published an open letter to the league calling for every team to stage a “President Roosevelt Night” at every park during the season. He suggested that fans could donate a dollar upon entrance that would go toward various service organizations. Landis told Keener that his idea was not necessary because the league had already announced plans to donate all the gate money for the 1942 All-Star Game to the United Service Organization.⁴⁰² The government never needed to take the measures it did during the First World War to bring baseball into compliance with the full mobilization. Landis’ proactive approach and the work of Senator Albert “Happy” Chandler of Kentucky, who quashed a rehash of the “work or fight” order that shut down baseball in 1918, made moderation possible.⁴⁰³ Spectators would take their cue from his players and follow his lead. Landis announced that teams would not be allowed to travel south for spring training in 1942 because “I would like to have the baseball fan not get it into his head that this outfit is being excluded from an onerous burden by government authorities.”⁴⁰⁴

Organized Baseball also had spokesmen who kept baseball’s image in good standing with the nation. Hank Gowdy, the first major league player to volunteer to fight during the First World War shared his experience as a ballplayer turned soldier. Fans should not accuse ballplayers deferred from military service as being slackers, he argued, “A man should be physically perfect for military service.” He was confident that “all those connected with Organized Ball wholeheartedly and cheerfully [will] accept the conditions created by the national emergency and will co-operate to the limit.” More than this, Gowdy reminded the nation that

⁴⁰² Sid Keener, “An Open Letter to Organized Baseball,” (St. Louis, MO), *St. Louis Star Times*, January 30, 1942.

⁴⁰³ “Senator Chandler Goes to Bat to Keep 4-F Players in Game,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 118, No. 26, February 1, 1945.

⁴⁰⁴ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Truman H. Newberry, December 24, 1941, Box 47, Folder 10, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

ballplayers made great soldiers not just for their athletic abilities but because they possessed “keen, alert, [and] receptive minds.” He also promised ballplayers who had enlisted, or soon would sign up, that the war would not weaken their skills. “I played much of my best baseball after returning from the war,” he stated, “and I was just one of many who came back from military duty resumed my career with no loss of ability.”⁴⁰⁵ Gowdy offered the patriotic reassurance Organized Baseball needed. He exemplified the ballplayer armed with civic-minded manhood who had authority to speak about the realities that faced the nation as it mobilized for war. He was an archetype of the ballplayer who represented the qualities of every ballplayer in the hero ethos Landis had constructed for the sport.

The war also rekindled Landis’ memories of his father and the Civil War. He wrote a letter to American League President William Harridge recalling the heroism of a previous era as a new generation prepared to demonstrate theirs. Civil War General George H. Thomas had been one of the greatest men in American history he told Harridge. Thomas was a West Point grad and a Virginian, like General Robert E. Lee, but the important difference was that Thomas had “considered his duty was to his country rather than to his state.” Thomas was “a thoroughly strict but just disciplinarian, (which necessarily implies that he played no favorites);” Landis declared, remembering the reunions he attended with his father the soldiers referred to Thomas as “Pap.” A high honor, that, from honorable young men: “good God almighty, Bill, how that gang would and did fight!”⁴⁰⁶ Landis admired bravery and honesty, two qualities he believed were intrinsic to Thomas and to the ideal player-citizen he strove to nurture.

⁴⁰⁵ “Gowdy’s Message to Fans,” Unidentified Periodical, Undated, “World War I Collection,” Box 52, Folder 28, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁰⁶ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to William Harridge, January 12, 1942, Box 47, Folder 13, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

In 1942, Landis seized upon another opportunity to honor a former professional baseball player who was also a war hero. He joined others in an effort to enshrine Eddie Grant in the Hall of Fame. The campaign started when Cy Casper, a sports broadcaster for KXOK in St. Louis, used his weekly radio show, "Sports Shots," to press baseball writers to elect Grant, a former third baseman of the New York Giants. Casper acknowledged that Grant's statistics paled in comparison to those already enshrined in Cooperstown, making him rather obscure to most fans. Yet, he did not let Grant's poor .249 career batting average deter his plea. He did not want the writers to elect Grant the third baseman. He wanted them to elect the captain of Company H, 307th Infantry Division who had tragically given his life fighting for his country during the First World War. Grant had become a casualty of war when shrapnel from German artillery killed him while leading a rescue expedition on October 5, 1918.⁴⁰⁷ Casper made an argument similar to the one made for inducting Dickie Kerr, but unlike Kerr's case, Casper wanted the BBWAA to ignore Grant's statistics altogether and induct him based on character alone.⁴⁰⁸ The baseball writers had already rejected a character argument that represented the foundation of Kerr's case for induction. How would they handle Grant's? Could character plus sacrifice succeed where character plus statistics had failed?

In the years after the First World War, the baseball community had worked to preserve Grant's memory. In October 1918, *The Sporting News* had declared that Grant was "a great player, a great man and a great American. He will never be forgotten by the fans."⁴⁰⁹ An Eddie

⁴⁰⁷ Kevin Coyne, "Ultimate Sacrifice," *The Smithsonian* Vol. 35, No. 7, October 2004, 75.

⁴⁰⁸ "On the Airlines: Casper Pays Tribute to Grant," (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 112, No. 23, January 15, 1942.

⁴⁰⁹ James C. Isaminger, "More Than This No Man Can Do: Eddie Grant Made the Supreme Sacrifice, Baseball's Hero Lies in France Near Where He Fell," *The Sporting News*, (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 66, No. 8, October 31, 1918.

Grant Memorial Fund had been organized by the New York Chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America. The Giants donated \$200, the Yankees \$100, and the Phillies \$50 toward a granite memorial to honor Grant.⁴¹⁰ They held a special ceremony on Memorial Day, 1921, to honor Grant and unveil his memorial at the Polo Grounds, home to the New York Giants.⁴¹¹ Landis attended the ceremony, along with Fredrick W. Galbraith, commander of the American Legion, and other representatives of the army.⁴¹² The Grant memorial still stood in 1942, but induction into the Hall of Fame would preserve his memory and broadcast his example well beyond New York. If the writers really wanted the fans to “never forget” Eddie Grant’s ultimate sacrifice, they had the power to immortalize him in Cooperstown.

The BBWAA did not elect Grant in 1942, or thereafter. He received only three votes that year out of the 233 ballots cast.⁴¹³ Landis went on the offensive. “I would like to see Eddie Grant’s name on that list,” he warned. But he also acknowledged he did not have the power to induct Grant. That was the baseball writers’.⁴¹⁴ *The Sporting News* documented Landis’ efforts to convince the writers to vote for Grant in the next Hall of Fame election. “Commissioner K.M. Landis has appealed to the baseball writers of the major league cities to vote Captain Edward Grant of the Reds, the Phillies, the Giants, Harvard and America, who fell in the Argonne in the

⁴¹⁰ Fred Lieb to August Herrmann, November 12, 1920, “August Herrmann Collection,” Box 5, Folder 10, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴¹¹ Fred Lieb to August Herrmann, October 25, 1920, “August Herrmann Collection,” Box 5, Folder 10, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴¹² Joe Vila, “Games Are Halted to Honor Soldier Dead: Ball Players of Nation Pay Their Tribute and Grant Memorial is Dedicated at the Polo Grounds,” *The Sporting News*, (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 71, No. 13, June 2, 1921.

⁴¹³ “Hornsby Becomes 27th to Be Voted to Hall of Fame: Only Player to Receive 75% of Ballots in Latest Poll; Chance Runner-up,” *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 112, No. 24, January 22, 1942.

⁴¹⁴ “Grant for Hall of Fame,” *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 115, No. 9, March 25, 1943.

first World War, into the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, N.Y.”⁴¹⁵ Grant was worthy of the Hall of Fame because he died in service to the country. He was a martyr of civic-minded manhood and Landis believed that inducting Grant into the Hall justified moral character that his military record confirmed. Connie Mack hailed the Hall of Fame because it enshrined baseball’s greatest players and the “American spirit which has made us a great nation.”⁴¹⁶ The Hall of Fame immortalized players, but the writers rebuking of Grant revealed that stats mattered much more than character. And, in the process, perhaps was a rejection of Landis’ hero ethos.

Landis pressed the Baseball Writers Association of America to adopt a “character clause,” as a requirement for induction into the Hall of Fame. This would allow the baseball writers to completely ignore statistics when voting, and instead appraise the moral worth of a player. “Shoeless” Joe Jackson had the statistics to merit a place in the Hall of Fame, but in the eyes of Landis, he was morally bankrupt. Character was the true embodiment of a man’s worth. A character clause would give the BBWAA justification to enshrine Grant as an American hero who paid the ultimate sacrifice, who had also been a professional baseball player. Placing Grant in the Hall of Fame would further demonstrate to the nation that baseball players were the type of men Americans could look up to as true heroes.⁴¹⁷

The baseball writers were not willing to expand baseball “fame” to include character as the sole evaluation of a player’s resume for induction into the Hall of Fame. Some felt that rejecting Grant’s case revealed a weakness in the election process because some players’ legacy

⁴¹⁵ “Captain Eddie Grant and the Hall of Fame,” *The Sporting News*, (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 115, No. 10, April 15, 1943

⁴¹⁶ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 107.

⁴¹⁷ “War Heroes of the Game and the Hall of Fame,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 115, No. 17, June 3, 1943.

to the game and its history could not be confined to a box score.⁴¹⁸ *The Sporting News* shifted its stance on Grant by declaring that the Hall of Fame “was designed to recognize baseball skill of the highest type...[and] while Grant was a grand character and while his war martyrdom should be recognized in some way, he was not a really top flight player and should not be elected into the company of Mathewson, Johnson, Ruth, Cobb and the rest of the immortal crew.”⁴¹⁹ Other ballplayers who were also veterans of the First World War, like Hank Gowdy, appeared on ballots for the Hall of Fame during the Second World War. None received enough votes for induction.⁴²⁰ The BBWAA did not want to consider character in a way that rendered statistics meaningless.

Landis was not able to witness the next BBWAA vote for the Hall of Fame scheduled for 1945. On October 2, 1944, Landis felt ill and checked into the hospital. The all-St. Louis World Series between the Cardinals and Browns was the first Fall Classic without Landis in attendance since 1921. Days, turned into weeks, and at 5:35 a.m. on November 25, the most powerful man in sports died at seventy-eight. The baseball world expressed shock at news of Landis’ passing. “America has lost a great man,” Chicago’s mayor Edward Kelly said. He was a model of “decency, courage, and honesty.” The tributes flowed in: “We shall not see his like again. To know him was to know truth, honesty, and integrity;” Landis “was baseball itself.” At the request of Landis, there was no funeral.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ “Captain Eddie Grant and the Hall of Fame,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 115, No. 10, April 15, 1943.

⁴¹⁹ “War Heroes of the Game and the Hall of Fame,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 115, No. 17, June 3, 1943.

⁴²⁰ “Hornsby Becomes 27th to Be Voted to Hall of Fame: Only Player to Receive 75% of Ballots in Latest Poll; Chance Runner-up,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 112, No. 24, January 22, 1942

⁴²¹ “Associates Eulogize Landis; O’Connor May Be Successor,” (Chicago, IL), *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 26, 1944.

Edgar G. Brands of *The Sporting News* wrote, “It was as Commissioner of Baseball that Landis became a national figure. A stern-vis-aged dictator who ruled with an iron fist, without fear or favor, making decisions that cost the men who elected him many thousands of dollars.” And yet, they reelected and reelected and reelected him.⁴²² Post-Landis, the league formed an advisory council to oversee baseball operations until a decision on a new commissioner could be made. Ray Dumont, president of the National Baseball Congress, wrote to Landis’ son, Reed, to share their plans to build a statue of the late Commissioner outside the Hall of Fame. Reed reminded them of his father’s wishes, barring any memorials built in his honor. Reed suggested “that it would please [my father] far more to have all possible funds and energy devoted to the development of baseball among the boys of America.” Dumont used the money to create baseball training booklets for kids.⁴²³ Despite Landis’ wishes, baseball magnates still found a way to honor him. New York Senator James M. Mead called on the baseball writers to induct Landis into the Baseball Hall of Fame. The vote was unanimous.⁴²⁴

Club owners also introduced an annual “Landis Memorial Award” for the American League and National League player voted by the baseball writers as the most valuable player each year.⁴²⁵ National League president Ford Frick explained that although Landis did not want any memorials, the award “which perpetuates his memory and his name...is strictly a Baseball

⁴²² Edgar G. Brands, “Death Takes Landis, 78, At Top of Power,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 118, No. 17, November 30, 1944.

⁴²³ “Memorial for Landis Turned Down by Son,” (Hartford, CT), *The Hartford Courant*, December 1, 1944.

⁴²⁴ Dan Daniel, “Landis Named to Hall of Fame,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News* Vol. 118, No. 19, December 14, 1944.

⁴²⁵ Edgar G. Brands, “Minors Reserve Right to Okay Commissioner,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 119, No. 5, March 8, 1945.

matter.”⁴²⁶ More than this, the Hall of Fame Committee’s decision to add a “character clause” to the voting process for the Hall of Fame was the greatest tribute to Landis’ legacy. His main objective as commissioner was to clean up baseball’s image. The game’s character had been battered and bruised by the Black Sox scandal, and Landis restored and elevated it. The BBWAA had to consider a player’s character and conduct on the field when evaluating their Hall of Fame candidacy. Although the new clause was unable to convince the writers to induct Eddie Grant, as Landis wanted, it served permanently to bar players like “Shoeless” Joe Jackson and the Black Sox from ever becoming enshrined in baseball’s most hallowed site.⁴²⁷ Although Landis had passed, his legacy on baseball, and American character would continue in the character clause.

There was no questioning that Landis played a major role in Organized Baseball’s more effective and patriotic display during the Second World War. Not only had he reached out to President Roosevelt soon after the U.S. entered the war, but his years of influence as commissioner had made a difference. Professional ballplayers who were of fighting age during the Second World War had grown up having only known baseball with Landis as commissioner. When the time came for them to answer the call to war, they did. By 1944, over sixty percent of major league ballplayers had either volunteered or were drafted into service, nearly double the number who found their way into the armed forces during the First World War.⁴²⁸ “Baseball can take pride in its service record in this war,” journalists agreed, “in contrast to World War I, when

⁴²⁶ Minutes of Annual Meeting of NL Clubs, Hotel New Yorker, December 11, 1944, “NL Meeting Minutes Collection,” Box 9, Folder 11, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴²⁷ James F. Vail, *The Road to Cooperstown: A Critical History of Baseball’s Hall of Fame Selection Process*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 63-64.

⁴²⁸ Robert F. Burk, *Much More than a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball Since 1921*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 71.

the charge of slacker was hurled at numerous players with some justification.”⁴²⁹ Landis had reconstructed baseball to promote civic-minded manhood. The players’ response to military service during the Second World War showed that his efforts were not in vain. Through professional baseball and programs like the American Legion Youth Baseball leagues, his work had taught and reinforced behaviors that served in interests of a nation at war. Senator Chandler made that point clear when he said the government did not need to enforce a “work or fight” order because, “Organized Baseball had already committed to helping in the war effort at a level it never reached during the First World War.”⁴³⁰

By the time the United States entered the war, there were over two thousand Legion teams all over the United States. Landis had helped to finance the growth of the program by requiring that Organized Baseball contribute an annual donation of \$25,000 to fund leagues all over the country. He had helped to grow the American Legion Junior Baseball into the largest, strictly amateur junior athletic program in the world. By the end of the Second World War, more than five million boys had participated in the program, with more than three hundred reaching the major leagues. The program’s growth attracted sponsors, including Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealers. They knew that supporting Legion baseball was good for business.

Ford explained that they supported the American Legion Junior Baseball program because the future of the nation was made more secure by the type of training and instruction the leagues provided. One of Ford’s top executives, Taylor Spink, described the values the program taught boys: “He receives beneficial training in sportsmanship, citizenship, loyalty and health.

⁴²⁹ “War Service May Blight Careers,” Unidentified Periodical, Series 2, Box 10, Folder 15, University of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives, College Park, MD.

⁴³⁰ “Senator Chandler Goes to Bat to Keep 4-F Players in Game,” (St. Louis, MO), *The Sporting News*, Vol. 118, No. 26, February 1, 1945.

He gets a chance for a professional baseball career. Even if he does not want to pursue a baseball career, he receives invaluable other benefits that he will appreciate in later life.” The coaches in the Legion program approached their job as a “civic duty and obligation,” Spink noted, which helped to prepare boys to serve their country. “Have you studied the record of American Legion players during World War II,” the exec asked. “As you probably recall, some 50 per cent of all the men called before the draft boards were rejected for some physical disability or another, but 92 per cent of the boys who had participated in American Legion Junior state championships were accepted and served in our armed forces. Many are prominent business leaders and, with remarkably few exceptions, all have developed into good, sound and useful citizens.”⁴³¹

The men who volunteered or accepted their draft notice to fight in the Second World War were the boys who had played baseball in the American Legion Youth Baseball program and in high school athletics where “sportsmanship” taught ideals of civic virtue. Whether they went on to play professional baseball or pursue other careers, Americans believed they had learned through sports how to think and act as principled and respected men. They embodied the characteristics of civic-minded manhood Landis had instilled into their hearts and minds through baseball. In 1945, Arkansas Congressional Representative Ezekial C. Gathings stated, “The qualities that make for a good baseball player are the contributing factors in the making of good citizenship or being successful in any undertaking in which one may be engaged.” Gathings was eighteen when Landis was named commissioner of Organized Baseball. He had spent most of his adult life developing a connection to the sport watching Landis impart his values to the game. Gathings recalled that although he had to follow his favorite players “painstakingly through the

⁴³¹ J.G. Taylor Spink, “Looping the Loop,” *The Sporting News, Junior Baseball Edition*, (St. Louis, MO), April, 1947, Sporting News Junior Baseball Collection, Box 43, Folder 2, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

newspapers from day to day,” he had grown to love the sport, and grow as a man.

Sports mattered, Gathings claimed. A poem found on a dead American soldier in France during the First World War offered proof of America’s fighting spirit that could only be taught through sports. He romanticized the soldier charged toward danger with the confidence and gusto of base stealer charging toward second.⁴³² Men like Gathings came to believe that baseball was intrinsically American because Landis had worked to strengthen the relationship between the sport and patriotic ideals like bravery, hard work, and sacrifice. An ardent baseball fan, Gathings was a Representative who had developed admiration for his country in conjunction with his passion for baseball. He worked to uphold the values he learned as intrinsic to the formation of both.

Gathings, though, also committed his career to uphold segregation.⁴³³ Like America, Organized Baseball was segregated. By the 1940s that encouraged segregationists to develop an appreciation for Organized Baseball and its players. They saw the sport as upholding their beliefs in racial superiority. When Gathings spoke about the ideals of citizenship, the connection he made was in relation to baseball being, and remaining, a white man’s game. Across his long and dedicated career, Landis had done nothing at all to undermine that disgraceful, and deeply American, belief. By the time the war ended, the conversation about baseball integration had intensified. The responsibility to deal with the debate on integration fell on the shoulders of the new commissioner.

⁴³² Ezekial C. Gathings to Oren Atwood, April 2, 1945, “Correspondence Collection,” Box 10, Folder 16, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴³³ *History Report of the Arkansas Secretary of State*, ed. Jonathan Runnells, (Office of the Arkansas Secretary of State, Little Rock, AK, 1998), 292-293.

On July 12, 1945, the sixteen club presidents of Organized Baseball unanimously elected Kentucky Senator Albert “Happy” Chandler as Landis’ successor. Chandler had helped keep baseball going during the Second World War and emerged as the person who baseball magnates believed would continue serving the interests of the sport. “I am eager to serve you,” Chandler announced upon hearing the news of his appointment.⁴³⁴ Chandler had been an accomplished player himself, playing shortstop for Transylvania College in 1917 and on semi-pro teams in Grafton, North Dakota and Lexington, Kentucky. He considered baseball “an honest game and...young kids coming along have got to have a chance to get into the game.” He wanted to remain committed to the vision Landis had imparted on the game, but Landis he was not.⁴³⁵

Chandler received congratulatory messages that expressed excitement about his appointment, but Attorney Sam J. Boldrick offered the most important reminder, “Gambling must be watched and stopped; Baseball must be kept clean.”⁴³⁶ In his letter, Attorney Noah Braunstein sounded like a reincarnation of Landis, “The game of baseball in America is the symbol of American youth. In fact baseball symbolizes the real spirit of America and when the powers that be selected you to be the czar of baseball they did more than that – they created in you a symbol of American youth.”⁴³⁷ Braunstein wanted Chandler to continue Landis’ legacy, ensuring that baseball would continue to teach civic-minded manhood.

⁴³⁴ “Commissioner Chandler Takes Up Gavel,” *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), Vol. 119, No. 24, July 19, 1945.

⁴³⁵ “Touching All Bases,” (Gallipolis, OH), *Gallipolis Daily*, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴³⁶ Sam J. Boldrick to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴³⁷ Noah L. Braunstein to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

Others offered their concerns for baseball to remain “the greatest force for good citizenship in America today.”⁴³⁸ Minister D.T. Brandenburg from Celina, Ohio said, “I am particularly interested in the moral welfare of the boys of the country and quite agree with you that [baseball] will do much to solve the delinquency problem.”⁴³⁹ The secretary of the National Society of the Volunteers of America, Charles Brandon Booth, wrote to ask for the league to distribute used equipment to youngsters all over America, “Give the kids a ball and bat and a corner lot and you don’t have to worry about juvenile delinquency in that neighborhood.”⁴⁴⁰ The congratulations and words of advice for Chandler reflected a testament to Landis and his legacy. For over twenty years Americans had experienced baseball through his leadership, and now, they expected Chandler to keep the game just as he had inherited it from Landis.

But he did not. During the initial years of Chandler’s tenure as commissioner, professional baseball underwent a profound change that altered forever the baseball hero ethos Landis had constructed. The campaign to integrate Organized Baseball gained momentum. Brooklyn Dodger team president Branch Rickey saw the financial benefit of adding a black ballplayer, and in 1946 he sent scouts to evaluate talent in the Negro Leagues. Calls for Organized Baseball to sign African Americans had started well before the Second World War, but Landis had lent no support. In 1934, African American journalist Nat Trammell had argued that Organized Baseball’s financial hardships brought on by the Great Depression could be

⁴³⁸ Rufus Webb to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴³⁹ D.T. Brandenburg to Albert Chandler, April 26, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 26, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴⁴⁰ Charles Brandon Booth to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

resolved by signing black ballplayers.⁴⁴¹ Yet, baseball magnates had paid little attention to Trammell and the talented players in the Negro Leagues.

Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senators and the man who had coordinated the Bat and Ball Fund during the First World War, summarized why Organized Baseball had not signed any black ballplayers before the Second World War. Black players, like black people, were inferior. In an interview for the *New York Post* in 1938, Griffith alleged that teams would eventually roster African American players, but only when their level of talent was good enough. “The economic stress through which the Negro race has been forced to grow,” he asserted, “has so hindered its athletes that the group itself isn’t to be blamed for their shortcomings in certain phases of athletic life.” Griffith appealed to a circular form of scientific racism: black people were unable to compete in the hierarchal structure of modern life because they had started out from an inferior position. But that, he explained, was the only position for which they were currently suited. He continued, “It’s unreasonable to demand of the colored baseball player the consistent peak performance that is the requisite of the game as it’s played in the big leagues.” Negro baseball was the sport for black Americans: “there are few, if any, [African American] players who could match the pace of the major league game in day after day play.”⁴⁴²

That was pure Landis. In a letter to Griffith in 1943, he had claimed that those who demanded that Organized Baseball integrate were acting in their own selfish interests. “The trouble with the whole [integration] thing is the issue of the black man,” Landis explained. “Politicians, black and white, are exploiting him and they have been doing that thing since the

⁴⁴¹ Nat Trammell, “Will Colored Players Enter the Major League?,” *Colored Baseball & Sports Publishing Company*, September 7, 1934, “Wendell Smith Collection,” Box 1, Folder 5, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁴² Bill Dooly, “Clark Griffith Makes Prediction That Negroes Will Break Into Big League Baseball, But Opines That Colored Stars Now Are Few,” *New York Post*, (New York, NY), January 8, 1938.

first slave ship touched the west coast of Africa and sailed away with the first Negro bound and gagged – headed for slave labor in the western hemisphere.”⁴⁴³ Landis and Griffith had not considered themselves racist, but like many white Progressives had inherited a paternalistic understanding of race that assumed Jim-Crow segregation as “normal.” Their stance on race aligned with men like John R. Commons, the nation’s foremost labor economist and a member of the United Immigration Commission under President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1907, Commons declared that democratic institutions simply did not work when controlled by “inferior races.”⁴⁴⁴ As a federal judge, Landis had truly believed that his rulings upheld the “spirit of the law.” Yet, he was never able to separate his decisions from the systemic racism and sexism embedded in America’s judicial system. The United States had built its political, legal, military, and athletic institutions within an overtly biased system that privileged white men, and Landis was not unique in regard to most white Republicans of the Progressive Era. Racism was not a social problem; it was a sensible, modern, progressive solution to a social problem.⁴⁴⁵

Although Landis did nothing to advance integration, he also was not the sole reason baseball remained segregated. Throughout the early twentieth century, the prevailing attitude held by players and owners was that African Americans were not capable of playing professional baseball at the level of white players. In addition, there were widespread allegations in the 1920s that several professional ballplayers were members of the Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁴⁶ After its revival in

⁴⁴³ Kenesaw Mountain Landis to Clark Griffith, December 14, 1943, “Integration Collection,” Box 1, Folder 9, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁴⁴ David W. Southern, *The Progressive Era and Race: Reaction and Reform, 1900-1917*, (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2005), 48-49.

⁴⁴⁵ Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 8.

⁴⁴⁶ White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 251.

1915, the Klan had grown into a mainstream organization primarily in the Midwest. In 1924, the city of Cincinnati had over forty thousand members. The local Imperial Official had written to the owner of the Cincinnati Reds, Garry Herrmann, to request that the Reds host “Klan Day” at their ballpark in July of 1924. Oral W. Baylor announced to Herrmann that Klan members were “loyal Red fans and your club benefits by their patronage from day to day.”⁴⁴⁷ Baylor’s letter served as a reminder to baseball magnates that although not all fans of Organized Baseball were Klan members, they found a potential financial fallout if they pushed to end segregation. Economic uncertainty was another reason Landis had remained indifferent to breaking down baseball’s color line, in addition to his preoccupation with inculcating civic-minded white manhood. Although segregation ended three years after Landis’ death, that was not the reason for its end.⁴⁴⁸

Organized Baseball was pulled toward integration by African American activists who turned America’s war message into a campaign for racial equality. In 1942, behind black labor leader A. Phillip Randolph’s activism, the *Pittsburgh Courier* launched the “Double-V” campaign, which aimed to bring about victory over racism at home as well as victory over fascism abroad. Army lieutenant Jackie Robinson, also a Double-V activist, wrote, “I had learned that I was in two wars, one against a foreign enemy, the other against prejudices at home.”⁴⁴⁹ Empowered by the Double-V campaign, Edwin Harrison, a superintendent in Washington’s predominantly black school system, had written to Landis in 1943. Integration

⁴⁴⁷ Oral W. Baylor to August Herrmann, May 31, 1924, Box 3, Folder 19, August Herrmann Papers, Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁴⁸ Wendell Smith, “Commissioner Landis Finally Speaks Out After 21 Years,” (Pittsburgh, PA), *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 1942.

⁴⁴⁹ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 38.

“will give a healthy boost to organized baseball,” he promised, “and will stimulate the playing of baseball among the colored youth. This will help to build up the morale and physical condition of the Negro manpower.” Everything that Landis had insisted that baseball could do for white Americans, he contended, it could do equally well for black Americans. Harrison also assured Landis that integration would grow Organized Baseball’s profits. Integration would “serve to confound some of the propaganda our enemies are using to the effect that America does not extend full democracy to it [sic] citizens who happen to be colored. It is a fine time for organized baseball to contribute toward a fuller democracy for all.”⁴⁵⁰

Even as campaigns to combat racism in America gained momentum, baseball fans, like the rest of the country, remained divided over segregation. After his appointment as commissioner, Happy Chandler was barraged with letters and telegrams offering advice on baseball’s color barrier. Joe Bostic, editor for *The People’s Voice* urged Chandler to seize the chance to make history. “As you know, the ugly blot on baseball, America’s National Game, is the continued exclusion from participation therein of Americans of negro decent. This policy...is not only unamerican and undemocratic, but not in keeping with the spirit of the code of fair play and good sportsmanship.” By invoking the ideal of sportsmanship, Bostic alleged that Organized Baseball was disinterested in developing civic virtue in every American. If black men had embraced their civic duty to fight for America – the greatest service a man could provide for his country – then they had a right to demand “fair play.” By leaving African Americans out of Organized Baseball, Bostic argued, the sport assumed the position that their sacrifices were not as honorable as white men’s.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Edwin Harrison to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, December 2, 1943, “Integration Collection,” Box 1, Folder 8, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY.

⁴⁵¹ Joe Bostic to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection,

The view from Meridian, Mississippi was stridently different. J.J. Smith wished Chandler luck, declaring, “I feel sure that you will uphold the old Southern tradition, ‘No Negroes in Baseball.’ This one thought was born in you and me – we like a Negro in his place but we don’t like a Negro out of place.” He reminded the new commissioner that no one in the South would support social equality because “a Negro’s skin is black and ours is white and this is the difference and it will never be any other way.”⁴⁵² Regardless of personal prejudices, though, Chandler knew that he did not have the power to stop a team from signing a black ballplayer. He also knew that any efforts to thwart integration could invite an ugly legal battle he did not want. Chandler stepped aside and let the club owners decide for themselves how they wanted to proceed.⁴⁵³

In 1946, Branch Rickey moved forward signing an African American because he believed that war had shifted enough Americans’ attitudes on integration. He signed Jackie Robinson, shortstop on the Negro League’s Kansas City Monarchs. While the white media, and some black journalists, celebrated Rickey’s move, Negro League club owners protested. They believed that if Robinson succeeded, more Organized Baseball teams would sign black ballplayers, sending the Negro Leagues into financial ruin and destroying an important black cultural institution. Rickey did not care about the fate of the Negro Leagues. He saw an opportunity to be lauded as a trailblazer for social equality while expanding Brooklyn’s profits. On April 15, 1947, Robinson appeared in the lineup for the Brooklyn Dodgers shattering the racist “gentlemen’s agreement” of the nineteenth century. Robinson’s performance on the field

Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴⁵² J.J. Smith to Albert Chandler, April 25, 1945, Box 147, Folder April 25, 1945 Albert B. Chandler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

⁴⁵³ Burk, *Much More than a Game*, 103.

turned into a daily dismantling of the racist myths that had held African Americans in subordination. Just as Landis had always argued, baseball turned out to be much more than a game.⁴⁵⁴

Robinson's debut marked the beginning of a new era in baseball and the transformation of the hero ethos that Landis had promoted since 1921. Landis had reconstructed baseball's white image during the decades of segregation, which had created an image of the type of man who fit the ideal of civic-minded manhood that was both expansive and exclusive. When Landis portrayed certain characteristics as honorable and worth emulating, he had excluded black men from that construction because segregation was viewed as "natural" and not discriminatory. Robinson revolutionized the purely white image of the heroic ballplayer who was brave and patriotic. He entered into and exploded the hero ethos Landis had constructed. He was a military veteran who was honest and hardworking, reinforcing the virtues that were important to the foundation of civic-minded manhood. Robinson proved that he belonged on the same field as white ballplayers. He also validated that black men were just as capable of white men to model civic-minded manhood, whether Commissioner Landis would have agreed or not.⁴⁵⁵

When Kenesaw Mountain Landis became baseball commissioner, he inherited a sport that was battered and bruised. He believed that his job was to not only save baseball, but to restore American character. He thought that meant he had to reconstruct American manhood. He believed that baseball intrinsically American, was key to that change. In a speech before baseball players at Duke University, Landis proclaimed,

"Baseball as we know it to-day appeals to every walk of life in every age. If we...study history for the past 100 years, we will note some very close lines between the destiny of the Nation and the game. Baseball has served for a century

⁴⁵⁴ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 83-86.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 323-324.

as a safety valve of human emotions; it has massed people from every walk of life on a common basis, providing the outlet which has caused them for the time being to forget more serious problems and the petty difficulties.”⁴⁵⁶

Baseball had always offered the nation solutions to its anxieties, he asserted, and helped the country cope with its fears and weaknesses. Landis believed that baseball bespoke the common identity shared by Americans past and present. He wanted baseball to remain as a part of the lives of every American because no game better served to remind everyone, young and old, what it meant to be an American.

In his last public speech in 1943, Landis urged Americans to action, “You can’t always judge the depth of a man’s patriotism by the height of his flag pole.”⁴⁵⁷ Every person should be assessed by their actions, not what they claimed to uphold. He had worked to instill civic-minded manhood in baseball because he knew that baseball would last well beyond his lifetime. Landis wanted professional ballplayers to continue to model the ideals of sportsmanship that prepared America’s youth to be virtuous citizens who were ready to act on the patriotic sentiments they learned through playing the sport. It was a vision both admirable and flawed that survived longer than Landis himself.

In his 1950 autobiography, Connie Mack, the lifelong manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, included a chapter titled, “To the Ladies!,” in which he listed questions he said were the most frequently asked by women. Among them were, “Should I permit my son to become a professional ball player; Are the habits of ball players good or bad; Do ball players make good husbands?” He said that he could proudly reassure any woman that “the habits of ball players are

⁴⁵⁶ Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Untitled Address, Undated, Box 25, Folder 1, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

⁴⁵⁷ Kenesaw Mountain Landis before Graduation Ceremony of Naval Training Station, August 9, 1943, Box 47, Folder 19, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

on as high a level as those men in any other pursuit in life.” Although Mack did not make any mention of Landis in this chapter, the confidence and authority he had in reply to questions about the character of ballplayers was a credit to the former commissioner. Landis had reconstructed the image of baseball along with the men who played the sport, and his legacy went well beyond baseball.⁴⁵⁸

In the decades before Landis became commissioner, baseball magnates had claimed that playing the sport taught American principles. The First World War exposed their claims as hollow. The Black Sox scandal, following on the heels of Organized Baseball’s blunder in the mobilization for war presented a serious challenge to baseball’s future. Landis announced his presence in the game by doing more than “fixing” the Black Sox problem. He knew that the sport’s issues ran deeper than gambling. He believed that baseball could be reconstructed to serve the needs of the nation. He aligned baseball with the attitudes and ideals leading reformers believed were vital to creating a patriotic and obedient populace. In doing so, he transformed baseball, almost single handedly, into America’s Game.

Before Landis, soldiering and sports had a complimentary relationship. During his reign as Commissioner, Landis bound them together. Civic-minded manhood evolved in the decades after Landis, but it had already proliferated throughout every sport in the form of sportsmanship. “Good sportsmanship,” declared Connie Mack, “is an American characteristic.” That was, in all its ramifications, Landis’ legacy.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 136.

⁴⁵⁹ Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, 203.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

On December 4, 1940, the front page of the *Marietta Journal* captured a rare moment. The newspaper published a picture of Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis boarding a train. His left hand clutched a newspaper and his right hand was raised in mid wave. He wore his usual winter attire: a trench coat and hat. But Landis was also wearing something he rarely displayed, which made this particular photograph so unusual. He wore a smile. Known for his cantankerous demeanor, the commissioner, rarely appeared happy in public settings. The paper's headline revealed the reason for his excitement, "Baseball's Czar Landis Will Visit Marietta, Kennesaw Mountain With Party Thursday." He planned to take time from his meeting with minor league team owners in Atlanta to tour the Civil War battlefield that had inspired his name.⁴⁶⁰

The next day, the *Marietta Journal* detailed the commissioner's visit. Landis spent over two hours at Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield Park, and commented, "it's all so interesting." Before he finally left the place where his father was wounded seventy-six years earlier, Landis turned to the crowd that accompanied him to the site and announced, "Someday I'm coming here to live." He had reached an agreement with the mayor of Marietta to buy a plot of land near the mountain where he would build a home after he retired as commissioner. He claimed that he wanted to be able to wake up each morning to the sight of Kennesaw Mountain. Landis did not live long enough to make that dream a reality. But on that day in December, the man who had spent the last nineteen years redefining baseball's image finally found the place that had come to define his life.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ "Baseball' Czar Landis Will Visit Marietta, Kennesaw Mountain With Party Thursday," (Marietta, GA), *Marietta Journal*, December 4, 1940.

⁴⁶¹ Alec Tregone, "Commissioner Landis Accepts 'Deal' For Site As Future Home In Marietta," (Marietta, GA), *Marietta Journal*, December 5, 1940.

What went through Landis' mind as he walked around the battlefield that held so much meaning, not only for his life, but for the nation? Did he stop at any point and close his eyes to try to place himself in 1864? Perhaps he allowed his imagination to immerse him in that moment when Union and Rebel soldiers exchanged gunfire. Could he hear the sound of the rifles and smell the smoke saturating the atmosphere from the barrage? Did he, for a brief moment, see the tent where his father had been operating on the wounded? As he peered at the mountain towering over him and the battlefield, did he remember a letter he had received in 1919? William Dunn, a drummer in the 31st Wisconsin Volunteer during the Civil War had written to remind Landis that "There are to this day, close to Kenesaw Mountain, ten thousand boys in blue who sleep there. Their monument is perpetual—Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia. They were our comrades, God bless them all"⁴⁶²

Landis spent his life trying to honor the memory of his father and those "ten thousand boys." He wanted every American to live in a way that paid tribute to the sacrifices made by the Landis family and every man who accepted as his duty the fight to defend liberty. Landis believed that the blood spilled below Kennesaw Mountain had given Americans the freedom to enjoy life – and baseball – in the decades after the Civil War. Likewise, the men who hunkered down in muddy and desolate trenches dug along the French countryside in 1917 and 1918 had allowed Americans to live in peace, watching their favorite players on ball diamonds all across the country. Brave and selfless men were the real heroes who kept Americans secure and their liberties protected. But in 1920, they were not the men boys aspired to be when they grew up. In the early twentieth century, that privilege belonged to professional baseball players. Landis had

⁴⁶² William Dunn to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, April 13, 1919, Kenesaw Mountain Landis Papers, Box 9, Folder 2, Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

worked to align the youthful heart with the ideals that should be admired, suited especially to times of peace.

Landis truly believed that his influence went well beyond baseball. A strong nation had to continue to raise civic-minded men who would accept any future threats to America's democratic principles. During his years as commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis played a central role in politicizing sports in American life. Soldiering fused ballplayer's celebrity status to citizenship to create a mutual dependency between sports and militarism through the reconstruction of baseball's hero ethos. Once he had kicked out ballplayers whose character was unworthy of praise while he protected the legacies of the ballplayers who had fought in the First World War, he embedded the values of civic virtue in the ballplayer hero ethos. When the boy emulated his favorite player, he developed a connection to that man and Landis could celebrate that relationship because he knew that ballplayer reinforced the ideals of civic-minded manhood believed to be intrinsic in all ballplayers.

During the decades Landis served as commissioner, he empowered the ideal of sportsmanship by aligning it with the same values of civic virtue. Sportsmanship taught athletes to value honesty, integrity, hard work, and sacrifice, which were all vital to sustaining patriotism. The United States did not need to rely on universal military training to prepare boys to become soldiers when sports served that role. Landis' tenure as commissioner created an intersection between civic obligations and sports in which professional athletes could no longer exist outside of politics. His legacy contributed to the formation of the modern sports hero. Baseball also reflected America's racism as a feature in years that Landis had constructed the hero ethos.

Segregation reinforced beliefs about civic-minded manhood and who was and was not capable of embodying its characteristics. With Jackie Robinson's debut, baseball's hero ethos

expanded to include African Americans. But Robinson and the black athletes who followed, were never able to eradicate completely the white ideal embedded in the American sport hero ethos. Even though Robinson was a veteran of war and a great ballplayer, he could never be as good as the men already enshrined in the Hall of Fame to some Americans simply because he was black. Like many American cultural institutions in the United States, baseball originated in and expanded within a system of racism and sexism. Although the proliferation of athletes of color created de facto equality in the minds of Americans, power remained in the hands of the predominantly white owners, managers, and journalists. They continued to shape the narrative about the meaning of heroism in sports.

In the post-9/11 world, a resurgence of nationalism tightened the bonds between sports and military service that Landis had begun eighty years earlier. Athletes like the Arizona Cardinals defensive back Pat Tillman, who gave up his professional football career to enlist in the Army, mimicked the patriotism shown by Hank Gowdy. Tillman, a white athlete, won widespread admiration from political and military leaders who portrayed him as a “true” American who embodied ideals of civic-minded manhood. Yet, his service and ultimate sacrifice also reinforced the contradiction embedded within America’s sport hero ethos. The political power retained by the athlete can only serve a process of conformity to the contemporary idea of patriotism.

When Tillman’s legacy is juxtaposed to that of Muhammad Ali Colin Kaepernick, it shows that athletes who use their elite status to raise awareness of social justice issues that criticize institutions of power, are vilified similar to Jack Johnson. An athlete’s voice and actions are only viewed as valid if they align with traditional values. Even today, Americans scrutinize players and their attitudes through a racial lens. When sportscasters allege that an athlete “plays

the right way,” they speak to a past “ideal” of athletes whose activism was a service to the state. Landis had constructed the hero ethos to honor men who reinforced patriotism. Athletes were never expected to use their platform to criticize networks of oppression that undermine traditional values embedded in American institutions. To an extent, athletes of color who advocate for social justice, are playing in the shadow of Landis’ legacy because their activism is denounced as a threat to white hegemony.

Adherents to the “sports and politics don’t mix,” adage fail to realize that it is impossible to separate the two spheres. At times their relationship is harmonious, and this obscures the fact that American sports and politics were born from and share the same culture. It is easy for many Americans to forget about racism, poverty, and injustices when the band strikes up the “Star Spangled Banner.” That they are inseparable means amateur and professional athletes can only become political actors when an external event or movement overwhelms the two arenas. The First World War was the first national event that exposed the tight bond between sports and politics. In the summer of 1917, as American men were heading off to the battlefields in Europe, ballfields throughout America made it blatantly obvious that sports and politics inextricably linked. Landis strengthened their bond by reconstructing baseball’s hero ethos to align with civic-minded manhood. He wanted to save the sport while protecting the nation’s future.

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