

# Lancaster City Kid Baseball Leagues

by Frank W. Landis

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During the year 1964 several men, among them Donald "Jake" Mahler and William Maney, who played baseball in Lancaster City Kid Leagues back in 1915, decided to try and organize a group of their old buddies and hold a 50 year old times Baseball Reunion sometime in 1965. Their effort was quite successful and a reunion was held in the spring of 1965 which 60 buddies attended. Some of the men had moved out of the town and others were scattered over the city and county and had not seen each other for many years. The affair was well accepted and a request was made to continue with the reunions each year with the thought in mind to try and locate more buddies, set up an organization and accumulate some historical records and pictures of the old days and display them at these reunions. Since 1965 there has been a reunion each year and an organization was formed, called the Old Times Baseball Association (McClain League, Eighth Ward, Seventh Ward and Sixth Ward Kid Leagues). In addition, each year more historical records were gathered and displayed with a large number of old time pictures that were gathered during each year. During the research

work of these historical records it was very interesting to learn how much interest many of our men in Lancaster City had in the young boys of the city and their future development.

In 1911 a group of these men, from the West End, including Mayor McClain and Henry Stackhouse Williamson organized a Baseball League called the McClain League. It consisted of President John G. Kamm, Vice President Chester Hemperly, Treasurer Dr. T. O. Garvey and Secretary Howard H. King. There were four teams: Red Roses, Owls, Holy Name and Lancaster Cubs. The boys were selected under strict rules, ages ranging from ten to fifteen years and the League governed on the same principles of the larger organization and conducted under rules of Spalding Baseball Guide. The family of each boy was contacted and they understood the condition each boy had to meet to become a member of a team. The grounds were located on Pine Street, between Lemon and Walnut Streets, and the other at Buchanan Park. Games were played every evening except Friday and Saturday each week. Managers of the four teams were as follows: Ellwood Reynolds - The Owls; W. D. Long - Lancaster Cubs; Matthew J. Trapnell - Red Roses; B. M. Bennawit - Holy Name or The Olympics in later years.

From the time the McClain League was organized in 1911 to 1915 considerable interest started to build up in Lancaster City for Kid League Baseball, and many of the sand lot groups of boys from other parts of the city started to show real performance on the baseball diamond. These boys were being observed by many men throughout the city who were interested in youth development in their section of the

McClain League diamond along West Walnut Street, later site of Reynolds Junior High School, with Kid League game in progress. Houses at left rear are along Walnut St., and houses at right rear face College Avenue. Home plate was in line with Elm Street.



city and also baseball and on May 19th, 1915 the Eighth Ward, under the leadership of Police Sergeant Negley and his friend Henry Stackhouse Williamson and Frank Shay announced a boys' baseball league was being organized in the Eighth Ward, consisting of four teams: Ironsides - Manager Elmer H. Hutton; Alerts - Manager George F. Rathon; Actives - Manager George F. Dommel; Braves - Manager David J. Harnish. It was arranged to select the players on a Tuesday evening at 7 P.M. on a tract of land bound by Third, Crystal and Rodney Streets. The area was filled with boys and their parents from the Eighth Ward, approximately 150 of them ranging in age from 8 to 20 years. The requirements were: Players must weigh at least 100 lbs. and should not exceed five feet two inches tall. This disappointed many of the boys and their parents. As a result, some compromises were made in the requirements. After the players were selected Sgt. Negley addressed the group and told them the sponsors of the League were himself and Henry Stackhouse Williamson. He also told them the grounds near the corner of Third and Coral Streets had been leased from Charles Frey for a diamond and no other teams were allowed to play on the grounds. He further informed the boys and their parents that they must behave themselves and obey the rules laid out and failure to do so will result in release of the players. It was also impressed on the boys that the League was organized for their benefit and the success depended entirely on their behavior and performance. The first game would be played on Memorial Day, May 30th, 1915, with opening ceremonies from City and Baseball Officials and the Mayor Trout throwing out the first Ball. It was only a few weeks after the Eighth Ward League was organized and started playing ball. The Seventh Ward believed that it had just as much right to bid for some fame for their youths as the Eighth Ward and they came into the baseball limelight and announced that in June 1915 there would be a Seventh Ward Baseball League. It was also announced the father of the League would be H. Park Bushong, a policeman who was a brother of the Chief of Police, Walter Bushong. With police Sgt. Negley piloting the Eighth Ward and his brother officer Park Bushong looking after the interest of the Seventh Ward League it was safe to hazard a guess there were going to be plenty of doings in the months ahead in these two Wards since so much enthusiasm was developing among them. The Boys 7th Ward League was organized on June 13, 1915: President, H. P. Bushong

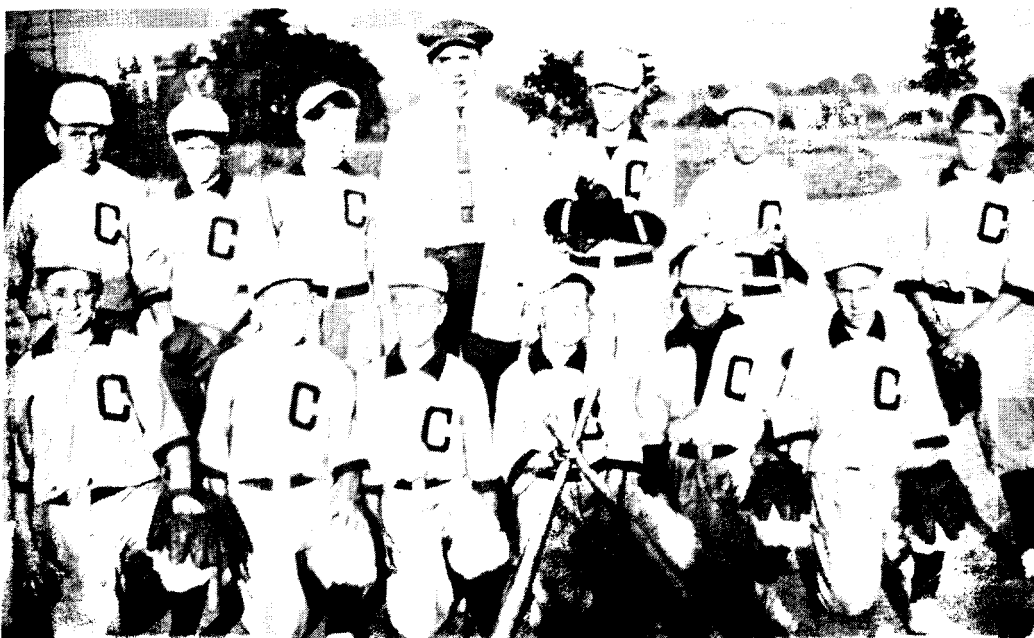
Officials: J. Calvin Weidel - Ross Weaver

Turk Giberson - George Lindeman

Harry Martin.

It was arranged to have the boys from the Seventh Ward and their parents meet at the Kuhn's Movie House, Duke and Chester Streets, so the players could be selected. The rules were: the boys had to be between the ages of 10 and 15 years old, their height not to exceed 5'2" and weight not to exceed 105 lbs.

There were many boys and their parents who showed up for the selection and the most difficult qualification was the height where each boy had to pass under a stick marker that was nailed to a post 5'2" from the floor. Some boys who were round shouldered caused considerable discussion and the officials and parents had to come up with a compromise on this ruling. After the boys were selected, President Bushong addressed the entire group and told them the requirements and what would be expected of each boy such as his behavior and ad-



Seventh Ward Chesters in typical Kid League pose. George Crudden, Sr. is in rear center with cap, and George Crudden, Jr. is youngster holding bats.

herence to the rules. He also informed the boys there would be four (4) teams in the League. The Chesters with Manager George Crudden, Sr; The Elks with Manager Aaron Stauffer; The Eagles with Manager Chester Wissler and the Pirates with Manager John Boas. The games would be played on the new ball diamond, corner of Rockland and South Ann Streets, starting June 14th, 1915. A final word of good luck was given the boys by President Park Bushong with the announcement that Mayor Trout would throw out the first ball and city and baseball officials would also be on hand for the ceremonies.

Very quietly in the latter part of June 1915 a group of older Baseball Fans got together in the Sixth Ward and stated they did not feel



Seventh Ward Elks posing formally with their managers. Luther Keyes is in upper left corner. Three managers in dress suits are (l. to r.) David Shoffstall, Jacob Caldwell, and Mickey McClain.

Eighth Ward Ironsides appear invincible in this pose with Manager Elmer "Piggy" Hutton.



they should be outdone by the other wards and decided to organize a Boys Baseball League in the Sixth Ward. On June 21st it was announced a Boys Baseball League had been organized and the officers were President, Frank Aument; Secretary and Treasurer, M. M. Bard. There would be four teams as follows: Lions, Manager Harry Barr; Cubs, Manager William McQuate; Tigers, Manager Lloyd Martin; and Wolves, Manager Charles Miller. The League also elected William Little and Percy Stahl as Umpires. A few days after the announcement it was arranged for boys and their parents to meet on the selected playing field, Old McGrann Park, the diamond then located in area of Marshall Street, Burrowes Ave. and New Holland Ave. and Franklin Streets for try-outs. The boys were to be under 15 years of age and some-where around 105 lbs. in weight. There were several hundred boys on hand for the try-out.

After the players were selected President Frank Aument addressed the boys and their parents, told them the rules that were set up and what behavior would be expected from the boys when on the ball diamond. He also stated the first game would be played June 28, 1915, with several city and baseball officials on hand for the opening ceremonies. Also, that Mayor Trout would throw out the first ball.

During the next few months the people of Lancaster City started to beam with enthusiasm over the youth baseball performances in the four City Juvenile Baseball Leagues and the attendance at the games started to improve considerably. Many of the business places in the city got interested and started to offer gifts for outstanding playing such as home runs, hitting the score boards, pitching no-hit games, etc. In addition the sports editors started to write special articles on the youth baseball interest and performance. Many of the fans from the different sections started to boast and make claims that their ball clubs were showing the best performances and started to encourage a Juvenile Baseball Series between the winning teams in the wards - particular the Seventh and Eighth wards because of the high tension being built up between fans of these two Kid Leagues. There was no question, a series was in order to satisfy the fans.

Early in August it was announced that a series of seven (7) games would be played by the champion winning teams of the Eighth Ward and Seventh Ward — Eagles from the Seventh Ward and the Ironsides from Eighth Ward. These games would be played on the Seventh and Eighth wards' diamonds and the 1st game would be on the Eighth Ward diamond August 12, 1915. The diamond was a very colorful scene and for the first game a special area was reserved for many baseball and city officials and the mayor. There were several thousands of fans surrounding the field for the opening game with a special area for groups of rooters from each Ward. One other colorful sight was the transportation of the players by horse and wagon through the city to the baseball diamonds. The Seventh Ward boys were transported by the

Grimacy Beer wagon, the Eighth Ward boys by the Spiedle Meat wagon. The first game was started with special ceremonies from League officials and Mayor Trout throwing our the first ball. This game was won by Eighth Ward, but then things began to run "nip and tuck" and the series went the entire seven games with the Seventh Ward Champion Eagles coming through the winners. All the games drew very large crowds, several thousands at each game. There was plenty of loud rooting for each team, particularly from Seventh Ward when a large group of girls had Cow-Bells, Horns, Whistles and old buckets to pound on. The umpire could hardly be heard at times. The Seventh Ward was so overwhelmed with joy over their victory they held several days of celebration with bands, parades, block parties and many areas were trimmed with the old time jack o'lanterns. The celebration ended in an all day outing for the Seventh Ward at Williamson Park.

The series with the Eighth Ward and a large celebration in the Seventh Ward was just coming to an end when the McClain League officials contacted the Eighth Ward League Officials and suggested a three (3) game series be played between their championship team, the Cubs, and an All-Star Team from the Eighth Ward Boys League. It was agreed to play this series and the Cubs of the McClain League won three straight games that ended on September 1, 1915. However, the Eighth Ward stars gave the McClain League Cubs plenty of trouble and almost caused an upset to the McClain League Champions of older boys. During the same period the Sixth Ward put in a bid for a series of games between their League Champions, the Lions, and the Seventh Ward League Champions, the Eagles. They felt they had a very strong winning team and felt they were entitled to a crack at the City Championship Title of the three Junior Boys Leagues. There were not too many days left in the season to play such games in the evening. However, arrangements were made and it was announced there would be a series of games between Seventh Ward Champion Eagles and the Sixth Ward Champion Lions and the games would be played on Sunday afternoons starting September 6th. The first game was played at the Sixth Ward Diamond in McGrann Park, then located along New Holland Ave., Marshall and Franklin Streets. There were several City and Baseball Officials present, including Mayor Trout, who threw out the first Ball. The attendance was the largest of the entire year at any of the Juvenile Baseball Games. There was considerable excitement throughout the game and the Sixth Ward Lions won the first game in a rousing victory, 13 to 12. Because of the weather conditions and being late in the season there were no other games played. Therefore, the championship in the three Junior Leagues remained unsettled for the year 1915.

In conclusion 1915 was an outstanding year in the sports history for many of the youths in Lancaster City. Most of these boys are now retired and have made a real contribution to Lancaster City during their lives in sports, industry, churches, local government and some in busi-



McClain League Red Rose batter, Samuel Hartman, assumes bunting stance as rival catcher anticipates a strike. At right, a gentleman of unerring vision and intelligent perception—a Kid League umpire!

ness of their own. There were also a number of these boys that had shown real promise and possibly could have been considered for a try-out in the Big Leagues of Baseball. However, the first world war was 1917, just ahead of them and the call to serve the country changed the entire sports picture for many of these boys.

Since 1976 is the 200th Anniversary of Signing of the Declaration of Independence it may be well to mention the active part the four Junior Baseball Leagues took in the historical event that took place in Lancaster City back on July 4th, 1915 when the original Liberty Bell mounted on a flat railroad car made a scheduled stop in Lancaster on the railroad siding along Plum and Walnut Streets. There was an all day celebration planned for the event and all four of the Junior Ball Leagues were scheduled to play games different times during the day and then assemble on a reserved area along the railroad track in uniform to provide a colorful scene on the arrival of the Liberty Bell. There were





Two of the Seventh Ward Eagles, Frank W. Landis, catcher (left), and Richard Hepting, pitcher (right). Hepting, a loyal Kid League reunion-goer, died August 1976.

many thousands of people lined along the tracks for the ceremonies to view this precious symbol of independence as it moved slowly along the tracks arriving and leaving Lancaster City.

It may also be mentioned there are many men with great baseball interest in Lancaster that also helped their youth develop that are not mentioned above. It also would be difficult to remember or locate all

the names. However, men like Dave Arnold, the Keys boys, Frank and Babe Seitz, Mickey McClain, Dave Shoffstall, Jake Caulwell, Harry Hepting, the Milley boys, Allie Albright, sports writers, John Carter and Giddie Shay, Walter Gibble and a number of others deserve much credit for the pleasure and development that was accomplished through their efforts.

Since 1965 the Oldtime Baseball Association, McClain League, Eighth, Seventh and Sixth Wards have had 10 reunions, one each year. The present Committee is Charles Haig, President; Donald Mahler, Vice-President; Charles Rieker, Secretary; Frank Landis, Treasurer; Howard Bauers, Adam Brinkman, Clement Burger, Benjamin Glazier, Donald Henry, Louis Host and George H. Snyder, Directors. Other men who have served on the Committees were William Maney, Paul Yarnall, Harry Weaver, Joe Musketness, Walter Wagner, Christ Muehleisen. This has been a real experience the past ten years locating these records; it has brought back many memories.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Frank W. Landis is a native of Lancaster, having served in his youth as one of Lancaster's oldtime lamplighters. He played in the Kid League on the 7th Ward Eagles team, and has retained his interest in the sport. Mr. Landis commenced his career as a machinist at the old Barry and Zecher works. Following this he was employed for the next 40 years until his retirement at the floor plant of Armstrong Cork Company, at which time he was superintendent of the manufacturing and fabrication in the Mechanical Department, where much of the floor plant's specially-designed machinery was built. As a churchman, he is a long-time member and president of the council of Zion Lutheran Church on East Vine Street, Lancaster. Mr. Landis is treasurer of the Oldtime Baseball Association (Kid League), and serves that body as its historian.