

DURFEE'S PARK.



BASE BALL TODAY.

DENVER vs. LINCOLN

Game Called Promptly at 4 O'clock.

Admission 25c
Ladies free.
Entrance to Grand Stand..... 25c

All Capital City street cars run to gate of Park.

All Buggies and Carriages admitted free.

May 12, 1886 advertisement in the *Nebraska State Journal* for the first home game of the Lincoln Western League team

**BASEBALL IS ALL THE RAGE:
LINCOLN JOINS THE NATIONAL PASTIME**

by
Daniel J.J. Ross

The coming of professional baseball to Lincoln, Nebraska, has much in common with its experience elsewhere. In the 1880s rapidly growing population, a desire to foster civic pride and increase local business, the extension of railroads that made inter-city travel reliable and relatively inexpensive, and national infatuation with the game made the development of professional baseball teams common even in smaller towns and cities. The contemporaneous and dramatic development of street railway systems, a parallel and symbiotic development with professional baseball, was also integral to the Lincoln experience. But Lincoln, despite its spectacular growth rate, was still a small city in many respects, and the development of baseball there was entirely due to one energetic individual, Harry Durfee.

When Durfee arrived in 1883, Lincoln was in many respects appalling. Although by 1886 it had a population of over 29,000 where there had been only a few dozen twenty years earlier, there was no sewer system, no reliable public water supply, a six-man police force, unpaved streets, and a high seasonal unemployment rate. Streets and alleys were piled with refuse and offal, were quagmires in the spring or when it rained, and saharas of dust in the summer and fall. Opportunistic crime was rampant—smash and grab burglaries, shoplifting, drunken brawls—together with a plague of pickpockets, forgers, and scam artists of all sorts; disease was widespread and health hysteria lay just below the surface. One poor traveler with measles was nearly run out of town as a smallpox carrier until a doctor could intervene and identify the case, and a panic over rabid dogs led to a wholesale shooting of dogs that acted oddly. Wanton gunfire at stray dogs on at least one occasion came perilously close to killing the neighbors.¹ Diphtheria, typhoid fever, cholera, lung fever (tuberculosis), and other products of poor sanitation were rampant, particularly among children;

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during the week of the home opener of the professional baseball team in 1886 the leading local newspaper noted "scarlet fever [is] raging in the city."²

Labor problems grew in Lincoln in pace with the nation's labor troubles: railroad section gangs laid off for the winter, seasonal agricultural laborers, and human flotsam and jetsam from the East contributed to form a largely male unskilled and unemployed floating population. The poor quality of the streets and lack of public transportation dictated that only the wealthy, who could maintain a horse and carriage and a place to keep and maintain them, were able to live outside the crowded, noisy, dark, and malodorous central district. Some workmen, radicalized by erratic availability of work, low pay, and long hours when work was available, and by the absence of safety nets for periods of sickness or injury, turned to nascent labor organizations such as the Knights of Labor. Semi-organized dissatisfaction with the growing disparity between rich and poor, as the power differential between labor and capital grew more pronounced, was spread by railroad connections and had its strongest base in rail workers.³ Edgy employers reacted sharply; ten Lincoln workers were fired at Fitzgerald's brickyard when they were overheard discussing the ten-hour day. It helps our historical consciousness to remember that the day a Lincoln team played its first professional baseball game, May 5, 1886, was the day of the infamous Haymarket massacre in Chicago.

The rate of population growth also contributed to social strain. Men outnumbered women perhaps three to two among permanent residents, and the number of males increased as workers arrived for Lincoln's newly established slaughterhouses, brickyards, tanneries, and railroad maintenance shops, and the associated building boom attracted workers in the construction trades. These workers were often single, or had left family behind until enough could be saved for travel costs and a place to live. The large floating seasonal labor population was almost exclusively male. Catering to this population, Lincoln supported a dense district of saloons, cheap lodging houses, dining halls, pool rooms, and used clothing shops interspersed with barely concealed gambling rooms and houses of prostitution. This brawling and desperate district surrounded the railroad depot and existed cheek-by-jowl with the more respectable business, hotel, and retail center just to the east along O and P Streets.

Yet the reform issues that energized Lincoln were prohibition and its allied moral questions. It was not the filthy alleys that brought the good folk to a mass meeting, it was the saloon trade; not unemployment, but prostitution; and not street crime, but gambling. Lincoln had been a pretty wide open town, but the forces of decency were rising and the weaknesses of the flesh would be on the run for the rest of the decade.

None of this was unusual, and differed only in degree with the rest of the rapidly urbanizing nation. Growing pains in Lincoln, entrepreneur Harry Durfee, baseball fever, and rapid expansion of street railway systems replicated an experience that was common to cities throughout the country. In Lincoln, however, events were compressed and changes were so rapid as to bring the national experience into stark relief. Lincoln was a fast-growing city in a region of fast-growing cities, responding as did the rest of the plains region to the wave of immigration that flowed there after the financial panic of 1873. As the more settled population of the town looked at itself in the 1880s, it saw two prime needs in its development into a full city—to control the ill-concealed immorality of the depot district, and to establish a reliable public transportation system.

Attempts to establish a streetcar system in Lincoln had been made as early as 1871 when licenses were granted for streetcar franchises, although nothing had been accomplished when in July 1883, energetic young entrepreneur Harry Brightman Durfee from Decatur, Illinois, and cousin Elisha Brightman (called Bright) Durfee, both still in their twenties, arrived.⁴ Likely benefitting from prior contact with local interests, and with some money of their own, the Durfees obtained a streetcar license with the support of the city council, an action that was subsequently endorsed overwhelmingly in a special city election. Capitalizing their new Capital City Street Railway Company at \$100,000, they issued only \$36,000 in stock, and began without debt.⁵ The Durfees began laying track for a horse-drawn system in cooperation with two important local businessmen, Lincoln state senator Carlos C. Burr, who was soon to be elected mayor, and his brother-in-law, real estate magnate Frank Sheldon. Both Sheldon and Burr had large landholdings within the city, and the Capital City Street Railway not surprisingly laid its track to serve the neighborhoods where these two had developed lots, in particular Burr's development in south Lincoln. A series of complex land transactions among the four men may have

represented an exchange of building lots for track laid to the development.⁶

The Durfees inaugurated Lincoln's streetcar service in November of 1883 and held the company closely, laying track and putting cars in service slowly.⁷ Harry became superintendent and manager of the line, while Bright was line attorney and president. Harry's younger brothers, Frank B. and Fred J. Durfee, also came out from Decatur, Frank joining the railway as a straw boss and Fred attending school.⁸ Bright may have had streetcar business experience in his home city of Marion, Ohio, but from the first Harry—who may have been learning on the job—became the most visible and vocal representative of the line. Whether from inclination or necessity, the Durfees lived modestly and worked hard themselves; they originally occupied a rooming house on 15th and K Streets, moving thereafter to rooms above the company offices at 1213 O Street. Newspaper coverage of the operation and extension of the line always feature Harry as a hands-on manager, out supervising grading and track-laying. Bothered by thefts from the car barn the Durfees established at 1640 A Street, Harry began to sleep there to forestall such losses, and suffered the indignity of having his shoes stolen one night in 1885.⁹

The Durfees may have been unwilling to cede either control or take on debt to extend their lines more rapidly, and whether made impatient by the slow development of the Durfee lines or by a prearranged division of territory, Sheldon took the lead in organizing another street car line, the Lincoln Street Railway Company in April 1884. The new operation's lines ran south on 10th Street, and east and northeast from the downtown district, not surprisingly to areas in which Sheldon held large tracts and sparking a real estate boom in those districts.¹⁰ The two companies both appear to have been profitable—the Capital City line made \$5,000 in profit in 1885 from carrying 292,000 fare-paying customers¹¹—and to have cooperated in various ways, such as selling through tickets good on either line. By 1886 Sheldon's line had more track, cars, and employees than the Capital City line, although the Durfee operation was deemed to have the better routes, and to give better service.

Running a streetcar business in Lincoln was not for the faint of heart or weak of back. Winter storms would halt service until work gangs could clear the track. Ice, mud, snow, frost heaves, skittish horses, and all manner of impediments would bounce the light cars out of their tracks, as on April

23, 1886, when “street car No. 3 of the Capital City line jumped the track on O Street between Eleventh and Twelfth...and in attempting to get it on again an enthusiastic driver and two small ponies bounced and yanked the thing about from one side of the street to the other for the distance of nearly a block.” On other occasions passengers would dismount and manhandle the errant car back on the track themselves.¹² When a lady complained to the local newspaper of the “discourtesy” of street car drivers, the paper advised “it is well to bear in mind that one cannot reasonably expect to find gentlemen of the old school presiding on the quarterdeck of a street car fifteen hours a day for one dollar.”¹³

The development of wage labor, a cash economy, urban concentration, and reliable transportation in turn helped foster an entertainment industry. Appealing to different publics, and with modest success at best, Lincoln in the mid-1880s featured rough prize fighting in the saloon district, horse racing for the gentry, fire hose team racing—which perhaps achieved its great climacteric in Lincoln in 1886—polo, and cricket. Participatory amusements included bicycling, although primitive and expensive equipment essentially reserved that sport for active and well-off young males until the advent of the safety bicycle in the next decade. More popular than all other participant recreations was the roller skating craze, in which Lincolnites of both sexes joined enthusiastically. Newspaper disapproval for roller rinks reflected widespread anxiety, as the rinks created opportunities for young males and females to meet in uncontrolled settings and also maintained galleries where anyone with the price of a ticket could ogle active young women. Given the population disparity between males and females in Lincoln, a difference particularly pronounced in the poor population, ogling was the only sexual entertainment available for many males. Those with some money went to the theater or the roller rink; those without congregated on downtown street corners, to watch female pedestrians attempt to cross the unpaved streets without soiling their long skirts, which entailed lifting the skirt above the level of the mud.

In a growing urban environment middle-class attitudes toward what we now consider victimless crime (the sex trade) or chemical or psychological disorders (drunkenness) were also concerns over the uses of leisure and over proper gender behavior. Anxiety over the roller skating boom was in large part concern over the activities of women outside the home. Leisure

entertainment included the music hall and theater stage, which offered shows where for a quarter a predominately male audience could watch frolicsome females in abbreviated costumes dance and sing.

Lincoln's population was also connected to the changing national structure of worklife; local and regional variations were being erased by a truly national economy and the industrial growth it fostered. The industrialization of emerging urban areas such as Lincoln created structured times of leisure, if not very much of it, for most wage-workers: Sundays and half-Saturdays off for laborers, who were likely to be poor, immigrant, and outside the control of church and neighborhood social pressures. More settled citizens grew concerned over how this time would be spent. If some entrepreneurs saw an opportunity for business growth, civic improvers were troubled by commercial Sunday amusements and the associated liquor traffic. Fear over the use of leisure may have been exacerbated by the growing sentiment among laborers for a ten-hour workday.

In the fall of 1885 the tightly knit city governing group, which had alliances with the saloon interest, usually through profitable rents they received from ownership of the lots on which the saloons operated, was challenged by an organized anti-vice movement, the Law and Order League. The League was a loose coalition, with branches in several Midwestern cities, including Omaha and Des Moines; groups with the same name in other cities were often business alliances formed in opposition to union activity, particularly the strike. The Lincoln group, however, was concerned with what it saw as civic betterment, and found its support among traditional Protestant groups, the prohibition movement, Republican party reform factions, and retail and development interests concerned with civic image. Declaring war on the violation of liquor laws, such as Sunday sales, sales to minors, and evasion of the regulation that saloon windows permit a view of the interior, the Leaguers also took aim at the associated evils of gambling and prostitution. The League evinced no concern with casual crime, such as the rampant picking of pockets at the depot, the thefts from occupants of lodging houses, street fights, or shoplifting. They seemed to believe that such crime was a consequence of the ills of liquor and gambling and would abate as those vices were controlled. Nor was the League concerned with the parlous state of Lincoln sanitation, in part due to incomplete understanding of contagion and perhaps a wish to conserve resources to

combat what they considered the central evil, the liquor trade.

The League was resisted with some temporary success by an opposing group, the Liberal League, which proffered *laissez faire* arguments and showed recognition of the class-based assumptions of the law and order movement by pointing out hypocrisies such as Law and Order opposition to gambling halls catering to the workers, while ignoring the popularity among the better-off of genteel gambling, such as progressive euchre card games.¹⁴

At this moment, as the availability and use of leisure time became a contentious issue both locally and nationally, the Durfees moved to emulate their street car brethren in other cities by establishing an amusement park south of town in an undeveloped area. The Durfees laid out their park with a carriage drive and diversions such as swings, boat rides on an artificial lake to be formed by damming a small stream, and above all, baseball.¹⁵

Streetcar entrepreneurs nationwide allied themselves with real estate developers whose sale of home lots furnished a steadily growing army of commuters for the streetcar lines, as the Durfees had with Burr and Sheldon. At the same time enterprising street car developers also attempted to create and respond to various uses of leisure and the travel of women. Street railway operators saw clearly that fostering nonessential travel was good business. They set out to provide not only the means to get to amusement, but the places of amusement themselves. The development of amusement parks and sports facilities, especially baseball parks, became significant investments of streetcar companies, and made streetcar lines both the creators and beneficiaries of the growth in the popularity of baseball as a leisure spectacle.

The story in Lincoln recapitulates the events in many another American city at the same time, but with an odd difference. Lincoln was nearly innocent of baseball. Nationally the baseball boom of the 1880s was in full swing, not only in an explosion of amateur baseball, but in the rapid spread of the professional game: in 1884 there were three major leagues, in 1885 the Southern and Northwestern Leagues were formed, and there was concomitant growth on the Pacific Coast, a rapidly developing area with many similarities to the Midwest.

Baseball came early to Nebraska. When the invincible professionals, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, came through Nebraska on their way back from a California tour in 1869, they played teams in Omaha and Nebraska

City, even if they judged the Omaha team the sorriest group with which they had to contend.¹⁶ Since that time the game had taken firm root in Omaha and smaller cities such as Hastings, Wahoo, and Fremont, which supported semi-professional town teams. In 1882 and 1883 the mighty Leadville Blues came from Colorado to play the river towns, and arranged games in Hastings, Omaha, Council Bluffs, Kansas City, some Kansas towns, and even against a Weeping Water team, but there was no Lincoln nine to play.¹⁷ A team, the Capital Citys, perhaps at least partially paid, was formed in Lincoln to play at the Nebraska State Fair in 1879 and they defeated mighty Omaha;¹⁸ in the fall of 1884 there was an intramural game between fraternities on the state university's campus; yet in 1885 the Lincoln paper reported more games of cricket than of baseball in the city, though it reported generously on the activities of town baseball teams from such nearby small centers as Filley, Palmyra, Plattsmouth, Firth, and Verden.¹⁹

Indeed the largest newspaper in Lincoln and also in the state, the *State Journal*, was averse to the game. Although the tenor of the paper was in general hostile to all amusements except perhaps the stage, it was particularly opposed to baseball. When the first reports reached Lincoln in October 1885 that William Henry "Nin" Alexander of St. Joseph, Missouri, was organizing a baseball league that might include Lincoln, that paper grouched that "We trust when he arrives here to look into the matter he will be politely but firmly escorted to the first departing train. There is no time or money here to waste with base ball."²⁰

A few days later those of such opinion would have a compelling occasion to deprecate baseball as time wasting and transgressive. On October 23 a touring female baseball club rented a lot near downtown to play a local male pick-up squad. Sedately named the Young Ladies' Base Ball Club, but more imaginatively advertised as the "Fairies of the Field" and "Belles of the Bat," the aggregation elicited the mix of fascination and contempt that for so long confronted female athletes.²¹ The *Journal* ran the barnstormers' advertisement and noted that the game drew "a considerable crowd" (later it would claim the gate was small), but complained the women "didn't know a foul fly from a home run and were not so fair to look upon as the public had been led to believe," and grouched that "the only skillful play was made by the girl that took the tickets."²² The paper seemed to view the exhibition as a scandal different in kind from other traveling shows of

the time, and followed the subsequent financial woes of the barnstormers with evident satisfaction.²³ The *Journal's* disapproval was widely shared, and not uniquely relentless; its evening counterpart, the *News*, may have been more direct in describing the cause for so much dismay, and skill on the field had nothing to do with it. "A large number of festive youths are out seeing the blonde base ball club this afternoon," it reported, but "it is not from any interest in the national game, however, that they go, but solely to see how a woman can throw a ball without swinging her arm over her head."²⁴

On the same day that the Young Ladies team caused such excitement, the two Durfees were at the office of the Register of Deeds to file the agreement for the land that was to comprise their amusement park. The Durfees leased forty acres south of South and 17th Streets from Charles E. Perkins of Burlington, Iowa, President of the Burlington & Missouri Railway, for a yearly rent of \$250. The lease stipulated that the Durfees "will use said premises as a pasture and a park and for general farm purposes" and that the renters could "clear up the underbrush from trees, and sow portions thereof to tame grass, dam the stream... for [a] lake."²⁵

In December the Durfees announced their plans for the amusement park, but without mentioning baseball. The announcement concentrated on the five-acre artificial pond, noting that the dam was almost complete, and that ice skating would begin that very winter. However, as the Capital City lines were barely begun from existing track on A Street south to South Street, it is unlikely that the pond was much used that winter.²⁶

Rumors of baseball persisted, leading the *Journal* to fulminate further on December 30 that

we see that the base ball fiend who is persisting in his attempts to organize a club league in this section still maintains that he has encouraging reports from Lincoln and is assured of strong cooperation from this city. So far as is known Lincoln has never employed a round dozen of able-bodied young men in a gang for any other purpose than work. It is a way she was raised up in, and now that she is old she will not depart from it. Base ball is a sort of species of gambling that will do well enough to play on the effete east—but when Lincoln wants a hippodrome to catch suckers

it will be good deal colder financial weather than it is now.

Two days later, the *Journal* noted without comment “the Durfee boys are fitting up a base ball ground in connection with their park and skating rink enterprise in South Lincoln.” The next day the paper reported the incorporation of the Lincoln Base Ball association, with Harry Durfee as manager and Bright Durfee as treasurer, and the two as sole owners, with capitalization at the nominal level of \$300 with a debt limit of \$200.²⁷ On January 3, the *Journal* grudgingly resolved to make the best of it—

[We] regret to see that the baseball business has taken a pretty firm hold on this city. The Durfees have a good deal of go in them, and we realize it will be about useless to kick any longer. Base ball, with all its hippodroming and other woes, its quarrels and wrangles, its mercenary umpires and its small beer sports—with all these and more, it has come to stay. Had we known this was what ‘86 had in store for us we would have turned back the dial of time or busted a-trying.

The newspaper would suffer from an obvious conflict over the city’s professional team throughout the year. It had defended its coverage of boxing by setting up a distinction between the supposed healthful and character-building qualities of sporting effort, and the disreputable conditions under which it occurred. Later that spring when baseball had seized the town by storm, it made a not entirely disinterested distinction between the professional and amateur games—

Editorially the *Journal* is not an enthusiastic admirer of professional base ball. But amateur base ball has its endorsement as a health and invigorating sport and recreation, and in order to promote exercise and good digestion the commercial department [of the newspaper] will furnish the best goods for the least money.²⁸

The newspaper was also sensitized to violations of traditional morality by the efforts of the Law and Order League, which it supported; disorder, no

matter what its cause was not welcome, as the paper demonstrated vividly by being generally sympathetic to the claims of labor but opposed to direct action by workingmen to achieve their goals. Yet the paper also came to realize the value of a sports team in fostering civic pride, and as evidence that Lincoln was no sleepy country town, but at least in 1886 was the superior of even its larger rival Omaha in supporting a league team. In the early enthusiastic days of the season the *Journal* challenged the major league team in Kansas City to play the Lincoln team on the closing of their seasons, and crowed: "If there be in the state of Nebraska a city or village wherein dwell those who think they can play base ball, let them organize and come over to Lincoln for fun or any amount of coin of the realm. This capital city has the best and strongest team that ever went forth to monkey with the sphere."²⁹

The infancy of the league in which the team would play was revealed by the lack of a name for the circuit, and speculation on the cities to be included ranged from Peoria and Galesburg in Illinois and Des Moines in Iowa as far west as Denver and Pueblo in Colorado. Such a league would have incurred railroad fare expenses far beyond the means of the smaller cities mentioned as possible members, as travel costs and player salaries were the major costs of team operation. Railroads charged fares by the mile, and the expense caused by distances in the Midwest was to prove fatal to many a league in the next half-century.³⁰ Other cities mentioned as likely members were St. Joseph, the initiator of the effort, and Kansas City, Omaha, and Hastings, Nebraska. It is possible that one plan was to gather in the remnants of the failed Western League of 1885—Omaha and Kansas City—as the nucleus with St. Joseph and reach west to Denver on the B & M line, adding teams in Lincoln and the red hot baseball town of Hastings,³¹ and extend eastward on the same line through Des Moines into Illinois. Perhaps Nin Alexander (and lessee Durfee?) hoped B & M President Perkins would provide cut-rate fares. Alexander had been a major league catcher for Kansas City and St. Louis teams in the expansion year of 1884, and baseball organizers in St. Joseph had named him manager of their team and hoped he would also use his contacts to assemble a league in which it could play.³² A competing group under indefatigable promoter Ted Sullivan of Kansas City was actively organizing the nucleus of what would enter the 1886 season as the Northwestern League, centered in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and for a

time St. Joseph and Omaha were both candidates for Sullivan's competing organization.

Alexander's efforts brought St. Louis newspaperman Al Spink, Leavenworth baseball promoter E. E. Murphy, and other organizers to a meeting in St. Joseph on January 18, 1886,³³ and what became known as the Western League was formed. A few months later Spink was to begin publication of *The Sporting News*, which would give the Western League extensive coverage, and he was to enter battles both figurative and literal with Harry Durfee.³⁴

Coincidental with the establishment of the Western League were the first activities of the Law and Order League in Lincoln, which brought an action on January 20 in county court against John Sheedy's gambling rooms above Quick's saloon at 146 North Tenth Street, which was more hard luck for Sheedy, prince of the Lincoln underworld, who had been severely stabbed five days earlier by a drunk he had bounced from his premises.³⁵ During the rest of the year, the League would mount a steady campaign to use existing ordinances to close gambling and prostitution establishments, and to force saloons into strict compliance with local ordinances. The *laissez-faire* opposition did not go quietly; when the Law and Order League moved against Tiernan's saloon, Tiernan's bond was posted by councilman H.P. Lau, and another councilman, L.W. Billingsley, acted as his counsel. The first charges brought against a brothel were brought on February 12. By February 18, twenty cases brought on actions of the League were pending. Yet on March 18, the *Journal* was to complain "Lincoln is overrun with thugs and thieves and pickpockets and crooks of nearly every kind and color."

While this was going on, Lincoln's baseball development took an odd turn. Harry Durfee, who one would expect would be looking after matters great and small for the construction of a park, assembly of a team, and the thousand and one tasks required by the opening of any new business, left for New Orleans in mid-February with the Fitzgerald Hose Team (named after team sponsor John Fitzgerald, the richest man in town, a railroad contractor who boasted he built 2,000 miles of track in a year). The excursion was advertised as a quest for the world championship in that sport (which consisted of coupling a hose to a pumper cart and carrying the hose a set distance, in this case three hundred yards) but in retrospect looks more like

an extended jaunt to warmer climes in midwinter. Durfee reportedly went “to keep the boys straight and to see that they get there for all there is in ‘em when the time comes,” a rather nonspecific task that lends credence to the supposition that he was merely getting out of the cold for a vacation and was content to leave formation of the team in the hands of his Durfee relatives and Al Spink.³⁶

As Harry was enjoying oysters and oranges with the hose team on the Gulf, speculation about the final composition of the Western League continued, and the *Journal* noted with satisfaction on March 3 that it was clear that Omaha would not be in the new Northwestern League, and had little hope of placing a team in the Western League either. The paper was beginning to see an unanticipated benefit in baseball—another weapon in the unrelenting rivalry with Omaha and a source of civic pride. It reported gleefully that Omaha was clearly not going to be in a league, and had already issued a challenge to the Lincoln club to play a reorganized Union Pacific team.³⁷ Although it has been claimed that baseball played a critical role in the development of inter-city rivalries, the Lincoln case would seem to be evidence that professional sport could succeed by fastening itself to already vital and deeply felt rivalries.³⁸

The Fitzgeralds returned triumphant in mid-March to a St. Patrick’s Day civic extravaganza of welcome, complete with parade, band, and speeches by the mayor. However feeble an event the World’s Championship Hose Race might ultimately prove, to Lincoln it demonstrated the civic pleasures of athletic success.³⁹

Harry Durfee returned to Lincoln one day after the hose team, informing the *Journal* that he had been detained on business, and the *Evening News* of the joys of life in Bay St. Louis. What business, street railway or baseball, was there to be done in New Orleans? Or was it for Fitzgerald? Harry Durfee otherwise does not seem the sort of man who can lay down several important on-going tasks for a month of Mardi Gras. Wherever he had been and whatever he had been doing, Harry was soon off again, this time to Leavenworth and the formal foundation of the new Western League at a March 28 meeting with club representatives from Denver and Leadville in Colorado, Topeka and Leavenworth in Kansas, who with Lincoln and St. Joseph agreed to a season of eighty games. The rules of the National League were adopted with the amendment that a batsman hit

by a pitch would be entitled to a base. This constituted a truly western league, as all members but St. Joseph were west of the Missouri.

Yet the circumstances of the league's formation revealed what may have been the Lincoln baseball team's greatest failing—poor organization and lack of publicity. Not only had the Durfees been remarkably unforthcoming about the team and its composition, perhaps understandable given the hostility of the city's major newspaper, but they also made no effort to publicize their schedule. The *Journal* was reduced to clipping the schedule for the Lincoln home games from an eastern sports paper, the *New York Clipper*, on April 14, less than a month from the home opener. The *Evening News* did not run the schedule until April 23 and as late as April 7 was not entirely sure which league Lincoln would be in. Durfee was frank but perhaps tactless when he announced that “all the players in the Lincoln club will come from outside the city, there being no first class timber in the town from which to build such a nine as will be needed.”⁴⁰

Finally, late on April 20 the Lincoln team arrived in its city, the *Journal* noting that Harry Durfee began to look for players on his return from the Leavenworth meeting, “having made up his mind to organize and manage [a team] on his own hook, furnish grounds and foot bills, and so on, but it soon became evident that he must go abroad for timber. Accordingly he opened correspondence with A.H. Spink, editor of the new St. Louis-based *Sporting News*, and asked him to secure a team of players that could stand up with such as would likely to be found in the new league.”⁴¹ Spink assembled eight players, several with major league experience,⁴² and others who would play capably and regularly in the minors for several years and make brief appearances in the majors.⁴³ Spink had secured one player of both charisma and ability, Percival “Perry” Werden, then just twenty years old and who was to serve as the team captain. All the players Spink engaged were from St. Louis and environs, as many in the 1886 Western League would be; St. Louis was then a leading center of baseball, with successful major league teams and thriving semi-pro and amateur baseball.⁴⁴ The combative and aggressive St. Louis style of playing was becoming well-known and widely imitated, and would predominate in the Western League, to the discomfiture of those used to the more sedate amateur game.⁴⁵

The eight sent by Spink were joined by two other players Durfee had engaged himself, bringing the squad to ten, which was not an unusually

small squad.⁴⁶ The practice at the time was to have the pitchers and catchers alternate as outfielders every other game on consecutive game days; if a travel or open date intervened, the main battery would start again after the off day. Not surprisingly, pitchers burned out fast; the man expected to be Lincoln's main pitcher, Fleury Sullivan, a major league veteran with the dubious distinction of having lost the most games in the 1884 major league season (35) arrived with a permanent sore arm, and would soon be out of baseball. Werden was thought of as a likely change pitcher, but while his arm was not sore, it could be rather wild.

Difficult as pitchers had it, catchers had it far worse. With only rudimentary protection—a thin leather glove and a wire cage over their faces—catchers faced pitchers from the uncomfortably close range of fifty feet from the plate. As pitchers took several running steps toward the plate before releasing the ball, and threw sidearm, it was difficult to anticipate the pitch, despite the batter's privilege of calling for a high or low ball.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly the catcher would stand slightly bent (not crouched) several paces behind the plate, and errors and passed balls were frequent as were injuries to the catcher's hands. This led to the following baseball wit:

The Burlington *Hawkeye* has [invented] and brought out for the season a base ball catcher's glove, which is widely different from that of 1885. The palm is not so heavily padded and the ends of the fingers are protected by sole leather helmets. When a hot ball comes against the end of the catcher's hand, when encased in one of these new style assassination protectors, it simply unhinges the arm at the shoulder where it can be readily replaced by any one without delaying the game more than a few moments. The old style glove did not take this kind of care of the wearer's fingers. Generally they were driven in through his ribs whence they were with difficulty coughed up, or removed with a pipe wrench in a damaged condition, or else they were completely worn out by the attrition and impact of the ball so that they had to be filed completely off. The advantage of the new glove will be obvious to all men who have looked upon the catcher when he moveth himself aright after stopping a solid shot with the first joint of his longest finger.⁴⁸

As the schedule was announced, Durfee noted, whether from conviction or caution, that there would be no Sunday games, “thinking that the boys can get enough sport out of six days in the week,”⁴⁹ which effectively limited to Saturdays the patronage of most of Lincoln’s employed population. Yet prospects were good for the Durfees as that April drew to a close; boats had arrived for the lake in their park, and the park itself seemed to be a good investment.⁵⁰ Southeast Lincoln was growing with construction of homes and the news that an Episcopal college would begin construction at 20th and South Streets. Durfee patron and partner Frank Sheldon filed a plat for Cottage Grove, a ten-acre development just to the west of Durfee Park between 12th and 14th Streets and south of South Street.⁵¹ This activity could only benefit the Capital City street car line, then hastening construction south toward Durfee Park from its car barn at 17th and A Streets, and if the ball team and the park drew well, it would be doubly rewarding.⁵² That June the Capital City Railway was reported as having four miles of track, twenty employees and sixty-four ponies, and running cars every seven minutes in the afternoon and every ten minutes the rest of the day. The worth of the company was estimated at \$60,000. It may have seemed to Harry Durfee that he could safely forego Sunday baseball revenue. To augment the attractions at the park itself, he hired the band of the Metropolitan Skating Rink to play after ball games and to give concerts on away dates during the summer season.

The Lincoln team—they began life without a nickname and survived the season without acquiring one—set to practicing, and received a challenge from Omaha’s Union Pacifics for a pair of games on May 1 and 2.⁵³ Nothing could have drawn better than games between the rival cities, and Lincoln’s inability or unwillingness to seize such opportunities (Omaha played St. Joseph instead) was a harbinger of its difficulties in the coming season.

Yet Lincoln was catching baseball fever that spring. Students at the state university met to elect an athletic association on April 24, and proposed to form teams in baseball, football, cricket, and tennis immediately.⁵⁴ A baseball team was selected May 5 and began to practice for a three game set against Doane College in nearby Crete.⁵⁵ Intramural teams soon formed from the freshman, junior, and preparatory classes. “Baseball is all the rage in Lincoln,” reported the *Journal* on April 29, as the Lincoln league team prepared for its May 5 opener at St. Joe. That May amateur teams popped

up all over the city, often using the university campus grounds for games, although occasionally the faster teams would play at Durfee Park. Occupationally based teams of clerks from downtown businesses, *State Journal* employees, Camp's Carriage Factory, bank clerks, and state capital employees were enthusiastically but unskillfully playing ball. Women and children were imperiled by flying baseballs as they went about their business, groused the *Journal* On May 26. Soon the more skilled amateur players came together in an aggregation known as the Young Durfees or Lincoln Reds. Members included Harry Durfee's younger brother Frank, ballpark concessionaire J.B. Herrick, and student Kirby Hammond, who would later that summer be given a trial by the Lincoln Westerns and therefore the distinction of being Lincoln's first professional player. Not coincidentally, Herrick's cigar store was next door to the Capital City Street Railway offices, which occupied the same building as Frank Zehring's drugstore. Zehring's son Frank Jr., later Lincoln mayor and theatrical impresario, would be active in Lincoln baseball for forty years.⁵⁶

The *Journal* began to sound almost enthusiastic about the game— noting with satisfaction the good play by the Kansas City major league team in a game against Chicago, proudly passing on good reports of its own team from sporting papers in Kansas City and St. Louis, remarking on the national economic impact of the baseball boom, and reminding its readers of the home opener May 12.⁵⁷

Reporting on Lincoln's first professional league baseball game, a 6-0 loss to the St. Joseph Reds, the *Journal* boasted:

Not a bad game at all...when it is remembered that it was the first game of the season for the Lincoln club and about the seventh for the St. Joe club. The defeat will be better borne by Lincoln sports, too, when they are reminded that only a few days ago the St. Joes pounded the Omaha club into the earth in a score of thirteen to nothing. Lincoln's team will do to bet on, and before the season ends the sporting reporter hopes to have occasion to refer to this early prophesy [sic] with pride.⁵⁸

On May 12 the Lincolns returned home to play the city's first professional game, and although their drab gray and brown uniforms were outshone by

the visitors' dazzling red and yellow outfits, they beat the mighty Denver Giants, 8-6.

The 1886 Western League must be accounted a success as all of the original six clubs played out the season, which was marked by a spirited pennant race between the St. Joseph Reds and Denver's Mountain Giants in which Lincoln played an important if not altogether noble role. Lincoln was plagued by team dissension; older players resented the brash attitude of young and vocal Werden, who ran the team in the frequent absences of Harry Durfee. Werden and Sullivan resorted to fisticuffs in a Lincoln saloon, and soon thereafter released players were trickling back to St. Louis, where they found reason to criticize the Lincoln operation and a sympathetic ear in Al Spink. The team improved its crucial pitching and catching personnel, but weak hitting (other than by home run king Werden) would prove a season-long problem, and the Lincolns were near or in the cellar throughout the season. There were games followed by thinly veiled charges of deliberate poor playing, although this was not unique to Lincoln.⁵⁹ Attendance was rarely as good as the Durfees expected,⁶⁰ and the grounds were criticized from the first. The *State Journal* advised that the Durfees should "grade down south and west from in front of the grandstand, so that base runners going from second [base] to third and then home, would not be running uphill." It quoted the *Topeka Capital* that the "Lincoln grounds are said to be the worst in the Western League. The site is an old corn field and traces of the furrows are plainly seen. The ground rolls so much that the catcher, standing at home plate, can just see the head of the right fielder."⁶¹ Over a century later, long after the conversion of the infield to residences and center and right field to the parking lot of a Catholic school, the undulations and slope of the land are still evident.⁶² Fare to the park was five cents each way, admission to the amusement park was a quarter, and it took another quarter to get into the grandstand for the game. Sixty cents for recreation was a lofty fee in an age when a railroad section hand made \$1.10 per day. Durfee, discouraged by low attendance and team problems, sold out to a local association in early July, after suffering the indignity of an early morning altercation with Al Spink in a St. Louis hotel in a dispute over payment of Spink's costs to assemble the team. As Spink had the foresight to bring a writ and constable with him, Harry lost his pocket money and watch to the constable as he and Spink pummeled each other in the hotel

hallway, and then his dignity when Spink wrote up the entire affair in a lively account in the *Sporting News*.⁶³ The Durfees sold the Capital City Street Railway to Sheldon and A.E. Touzalin in November 1886 for \$65,000, some of which they took in large land parcels north of the city. Whether or not the Durfees made any money on the team and amusement park, their street railway venture had been very profitable.⁶⁴

From the first the Durfees sought community acceptance of the baseball effort by eschewing Sunday games, admitting spectators in carriages free to a section of the ballgrounds on the rightfield line, and establishing a ladies' section in which smoking was not permitted. Historians of the early professional game often note that baseball promoters sought to lend respectability to the game by making it inviting to women. The presence of women increased the gate receipts, and baseball moguls were acute enough to discern the benefit of women as fans, and the attendance of women at the games was always a matter of note in newspaper accounts. Although German immigrants were disgusted at what they termed the idleness of American women,⁶⁵ women, too, were beginning to take advantage of leisure and mobility to get out on their own in groups or singly; younger women began experimenting with the new ways that popular culture taught them to be young and unmarried.⁶⁶

But leisure was a highly charged concept in the 1880s. Lincoln was a railroad town, and railroaders, single and married, were known for drink and gambling, and as frequenters of houses of prostitution.⁶⁷ In 1886 suffragist Helen Gouger of the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association declared clearly what the suffrage campaign was about, a "Christian crusade" against "the three corrupting elements of social and political life—the saloon, the brothel, and gambling den," the same evils the Law and Order Leagues were combating.⁶⁸ Women would protect their families and themselves by redeeming local politics *and* local society; they would now take action to control where their men went outside the home. Baseball magnates, including Harry Durfee, appreciated this growing power. Durfee's successors as operators of the team (led by Sheldon and real estate agent J.H. Threw) risked these forces when in an effort to increase the baseball team's gate they scheduled two Sunday games. The League would not be mocked, and backed by sabbatarian sermons in nearly every Lincoln church, it prevented the first game and brought action against the team for playing the

second. The amusement industry, of which baseball was an important part, would have to operate in space defined by the growing power and influence of women, particularly middle class reformist women and their allies.

Changes in leisure and sex roles were entwined. Women's support for prohibition was not entirely altruistic; riddance of the evil would doubtless aid the poor, but it would also remove a dangerous attraction for their male kin. As was recognized at the time, there was an entirely new dimension to the roles of men and women. "Among [the industrial revolution's] effects were the commuting husband and the stay-at-home wife who never actually sees what her husband does down at the millyard or the foundry."⁶⁹ John Ruskin pointed out at the time that man has to go out into the world and be corrupted, but "within his house...unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offense."⁷⁰ And the dangers were not only for the males. What would women themselves do, with free time and money in their pockets?

Various reform groups began to campaign to control the use of leisure. Anti-saloon leagues and organized efforts to curtail or eradicate gambling and prostitution heightened awareness of the use of leisure. Mixed into these concerns were changing ideas of women's sexuality; in the mid-1880s the reformist view spread that women who engaged in extra-marital sex were not depraved, but rather the victims of seduction, of male lust. If this were the case, contact of young women with unreliable males became gravely dangerous. As a consequence, a national effort to increase the age of consent also led to heightened awareness of the uses and danger of leisure.

Baseball's association with gambling was pervasive.⁷¹ Given the open gambling at baseball games, rowdy behavior by players and fans alike, opposition to Sunday amusements, and the novelty of females moving autonomously in public space, professional sports had to struggle to be "respectable," to be a place where women and middle-class men could be seen by their neighbors and associates.⁷² Proceedings at the park were not always decorous—the spectators and the players both were prone to "kicking," or quarreling vociferously with umpiring decisions, and fights were not unknown. The *News*, generally favorable to the team, noted early in the season that three policemen were assigned to the park on game days, and that an officer would escort women to their seats in the grandstand. In

mid-June Durfee announced that a streetcar would be set aside for exclusive use of ladies after the games; male patrons had been pushing ahead and filling the cars before the women could board.⁷³ The struggle for respectability was evident in Lincoln, as baseball contended with the opposition of the leading newspaper, the churches, and the minatory presence of the Law and Order League. The opposition was not monolithic—the *Journal* noted the *laissez-faire* arguments against Sunday blue laws, even rebuked the *News* for characterizing the Lincolnites who went to Omaha to bet on Lincoln's team in a July exhibition game as wastrels and idle gamblers, pointing out the professional and social standing of the members of the Lincoln crowd. The *Journal* made quite a reversal of its attitude about gambling on the games. While it frequently chastised the team for poor play and quarreling with the umpire, its reporter was not loath to recount his own betting on the team. It is easy to overplay the role of the newspaper on local events and attitudes, given the paucity of other sources, but the ambivalence of the *Journal* may have reflected variations in community opinion.

Baseball sank deep roots into Lincoln that summer. Whatever the fortunes of its professional club, and they would rise and fall dramatically in the next ten years, the population adopted the game enthusiastically. Baseball fever reigned where it had not even existed before. Despite the problems of the 1886 season, the new ownership in Lincoln raised sufficient funds to field an extremely competitive team in the 1887 Western League, finishing a close second to a stellar Topeka nine. The league as a whole was overextended in 1887. In an effort to attract good players, teams in smaller cities paid more to attract quality ballplayers than attendance income would justify and were later forced by money woes to cease play in mid-season and be replaced by eager rivals, who would often repeat the same mistake. Part of the problem was the fierce emphasis on winning; teams not in contention found themselves playing to empty stands at home. Financial exhaustion would halt the Western League early in the 1888 season, but Lincoln would not be long without a professional team in some league for the next seventy-five years. And perhaps more importantly, baseball had taken firm root from school children through the University's team. A strong American Legion and semi-pro tradition would endure from that day to this.

Durfee and his park are long forgotten, although between Lake and

Harrison Streets his pond still survives in a smaller version now named for Charles H. Rudge, a later philanthropist. But if a visitor walks east along Lake Street past the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, which stands on the southeast corner of 17th Street and Lake where the Capital City streetcars disgorged eager baseball fans in 1886, he will find the parochial school behind the church. That school stands along the rightfield line where wealthy fans watched the game from their carriages, and on the wall of that school is a mural of ballplayers on a green field with a stream and lake in the near distance. Maybe it is just a coincidence.

NOTES

1. A good summary of the rabies hysteria appeared in the February 16, 1886 *Evening News*.
2. *State Journal*, May 15, 1886.
3. That 1886 Lincoln membership of the Knights was put at five hundred, with sixty-five to seventy being "colored men." *State Journal*, June 8, 1886.
4. Harry B. Durfee (1856-1897) was born February 20, 1856 in Decatur, Illinois, the second child and first son of Henry B. Durfee (1820-1880) and Lucretia Busby Durfee (c. 1832-after 1871). Elisha (b. 1859 in Marion, Ohio) was his cousin, the son of Henry Durfee's brother Thomas (1816-1863). Harry had been practicing law with Warren & Durfee, that Durfee being Bradford Kirk Durfee (1838-1916), son of Nathan, another of Henry's brothers, and therefore uncle to Harry and Elisha. Bradford Durfee was an influential lawyer and official in several Decatur firms (Warren & Durfee Manufacturing, Decatur Gas & Coke, Decatur Electric Co.), which may have made him the source of some of the Capital City Street Railway start-up funds.
5. Elmo Bryant Phillips, "A History of Street Railways in Nebraska," Ph.D. thesis, University of Nebraska. Lincoln, 1944, 19.
6. On October 23, 1884 Burr, Sheldon and the two Durfees registered a trust agreement whereby Burr divided ownership of the large tract known as Burr's Addition among the four parties. Another exchange of significant land by Burr to the Durfees for a nominal sum took place on June 12, 1885.
7. The Durfee line began with four cars. Phillips, "A History of Street Railways in Nebraska," 19.
8. Frank was born circa 1863 and Fred circa 1868. Frank had been working as a dipper (workman who dips metal into the coating chemicals in the "hot dipped" galvanized process) for an agricultural implement manufacturer in Decatur and then as a clerk in the Warren & Durfee law office.
9. Phillips, "Horse Car Days and Ways in Nebraska," 24-5. The daily newspapers carried frequent reports of street railway problems with petty crime. The Capital City

line's lawyer Ryan once pursued a fare-beater and brought back his cap as collateral for payment of the nickel fare; on a cold January night three tramps were found cooking a meal in an out-of-service Capital City car.

10. Sheldon bought out his co-investors in the Lincoln Street Railway on March 6, 1886. *Journal*, March 9, 1886; *Evening News*, March 6, 1886.

11. Phillips, "A History of Street Railways in Nebraska," 21.

12. *State Journal*, April 24, 1886. Within three days of car #3's adventure, the Lincoln Street Railway was ordered by the city to repair its track to permit the passage of horse teams—which always had precedence over the street railways—and another driver was assaulted on the Tenth Street line in a dispute over change.

13. *State Journal*, May 8, 1886.

14. An unfriendly but useful description of the Liberal League appeared in the *Evening News* of May 11, 1886.

15. At least one other operation attempted a similar attraction. On February 21, 1886, the *Journal* reported promoter Fred Paschen was planning a "city garden" at remote G and 38th Streets, with a dance hall, ten-pin alley, arbors, and picnicking facilities. The location was far from any street car line, actual or proposed. The park opened in May, and Paschen and his associates were soon in trouble for selling alcohol and permitting bowling on the Sabbath. *State Journal*, May 19 and June 25, 1886. The *Journal* criticized Durfee Park on May 14, "...Mssrs. Durfee, we fear, underrated the desire of our people for some place to go, of which Lincoln has formerly been entirely destitute. Better grounds, more extensively equipped, would have been a good investment. They should take the hint before some other enterprising person concludes to put in a park on the R street line of the Lincoln company."

16. The best treatment of the relationship of the street car industry and baseball is *Mudville's Revenge* by Ted Vincent, republished in paperback as *The Rise and Fall of American Sport*.

17. Greg Rhodes and John Erardi, *The First Boys of Summer*. (Cincinnati: Road West Publishing, 1994), 73.

18. During the 1883 tour the Blues employed a Wahoo semi-pro pitcher, Ben Johnson, in a July 28 game against the Omaha Union Pacifics. Wahoo subsequently went on a tour of its own into Iowa and Illinois. *State Journal*, August 1, 1883.

19. *Nebraska State Journal*, August 1, 1883.

20. For Lincoln Cricket Club see *Daily Evening News*, July 13, September 15, September 18, 1885. The cricket community attempted to reform in 1886; see news of its efforts in the *State Journal*, June 23, June 30, 1886. The sole mention of a Lincoln baseball team in the summer of 1885 reports a home and away pair of games with Beatrice in the *Evening News*, September 7, 1885. The survival of cricket in Nebraska into the mid-1880s is in interesting contrast to usual reports of that game's history. See S.W. Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting Tradition in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 61.

21. October 21, 1885. The *Daily Evening News* was much less hostile, but in its story

on Alexander's plans of October 13 admitted "Lincoln has not heretofore given much attention to the national game."

22. Female baseball was not unknown on the plains. Everett Dick in *The Sod House Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 281, notes a female club in Wichita in 1873.

23. *State Journal*, October 24, 1885.

24. See *State Journal*, October 24, November 1, November 26, 1885, and March 10, 1886.

25. *Evening News*, October 23, 1885. Throughout 1886 the *Sporting News* was to announce with satisfaction the troubles of a traveling women's team in Texas and Louisiana.

26. Lancaster County Deed Book 24, page 425. The date of the agreement was October 1, 1885. In a puzzling development, when Perkins signed the agreement in Burlington on October 12 he insisted that the words "general farm purposes" be underlined. Had the Durfees been coy about their intended use, or was Perkins distancing himself from the true purposes?

27. *Evening News*, December 13, 1885. The spring work on extending the track south to South Street did not begin until April 20, 1886. *Evening News*, April 20, 1886. The pond, somewhat smaller in size than envisioned by the Durfees, still exists. The residential neighborhood where the park stood has streets named Lake and Perkins, but sadly, not Durfee.

28. In contrast, the Denver team was capitalized in January at \$5,000, and players were reportedly being signed. *State Journal*, January 29, 1886. Oshkosh, in the Northwestern League, capitalized itself at \$10,000. *The Sporting News*, March 17, 1886.

29. *State Journal*, May 20, 1886.

30. *State Journal*, May 11, 1886.

31. The B & M and Union Pacific lines offered excursion group rates of one and one-third times the one-way fare between two points. On this basis, a ticket cost \$2.70 per person for a group round-trip fare between Lincoln and Omaha.

32. Hastings was nursing hopes of admittance to the league as late as April 7, and was still organizing a team on May 8. As the Omaha Union Pacifics did, the Hastings semi-pro town team would play exhibitions with Western League clubs, and with one another. *Evening News*, April 7 and May 8, 1886.

33. The January 12 report in the *Journal* stated that Alexander had visited each of the possible cities, but no mention of a visit to Lincoln has been found.

34. The *State Journal*, January 12, 1886, reported January 13; the date of the 18th is from Bryson's history of the Western League, page 17. The *Journal* noted representatives were expected from St. Joe, Leavenworth, Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Denver, Pueblo, and possibly Kansas City.

35. *State Journal*, January 12, 1886, also reported that Harry and Elisha Durfee were off to Decatur, Illinois, on business, leaving Frank Durfee in charge of the line. Harry returned on January 25, reporting he had been snowbound in Atchison, Kansas. Harry

leagues (the National League, American Association and the Union Association), and when they consolidated into two for the 1885 season, many non-regulars and even a few regulars were forced into the minors. On the Lincoln squad, only Sullivan had been a regular in the 1884 majors.

44. Belden Hill had a cup of coffee with Baltimore in 1890, another expansion season, and Werden, was in the majors at least part of the 1888, 1890-93, and 1897 seasons.

45. *The Sporting News*, May 31, 1886 listed twenty-one St. Louisans of a total of sixty-nine players on Western League rosters. Lincoln then had the largest number, seven (Rademaker, East, Werden, Nolke [Noelke], Hickman, Houtz, and Sullivan).

46. For the influence of the rowdy St. Louis style, and its effect on the game and on spectators, see Bill James, *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 23.

47. Bryson, 28. However, *The Sporting News*, May 31, 1886, listed twelve men on St. Joe's roster.

48. James, 22. Despite requiring seven bad balls to earn a base on balls, walks were not infrequent, a testament to the difficulties with which a catcher contended.

49. Quoted in the *Journal*, April 17, 1886.

50. *State Journal*, April 21, 1886. Harry Durfee, who was active in Republican Party affairs, may also have been aware of the preparation of "an ordinance to restrain and prohibit the desecration of the Sabbath day within the limits of the city of Lincoln," introduced at a city council meeting early in June. *State Journal*, June 8, 1886.

51. Just how popular the park as a park proved to be is not clear from the newspaper reports of the time. On May 14 the *State Journal* complained "...the Mssrs. Durfee, we fear, underrated the desire of our people for some place to go, of which Lincoln has been entirely destitute. Better grounds, more extensively equipped, would have been a good investment." Durfee may have paid attention for on June 11 that newspaper reported, "The band concert at Durfee's park yesterday was a grand success, and some of the best people in town took advantage of the opportunity and visited the park, which is fitted up with hammocks and swings. The musical treat occurs hereafter every Thursday and Saturday and also every evening after the ball game. Mr. Durfee is entitled to considerable credit for furnishing a fashionable resort for Lincoln and should be well patronized."

52. *Journal*, April 22 and May 1, 1886. Very soon thereafter the plat for another development, Johnson's Addition, was filed for about five acres between 14th and 16th Streets south of South Street. *Journal*, May 11, 1886.

53. The Capital City line ran cars to the park every seven and one-half minutes. *Evening News*, May 9, 1886.

54. Spink derisively referred to the team as the Lincoln Tramps, but he also referred to Durfee as "The King of Lincoln" and "Arry B. Tuffee" among other things. The team is often cited as "Treeplanters" but no evidence for this name in the 1886 season has yet been seen. Perry Werden would call his team the Lincoln Hams after he left, but that may also have been idiosyncratic.

55. *Journal*, April 25, 1886. The University of Nebraska baseball team formed May 4. *Journal*, May 5, 1886.
56. *State Journal* articles on the genesis of the University of Nebraska baseball team appear May 5, 8, and 15, 1886.
57. Herrick's store was at 1213 O Street, and the CCSR offices and Zehring's Drugstore were at 1221 O. Herrick lived across the street at 1240 O.
58. Studies of minor leagues of this period have properly noted the role of the local newspaper in binding the baseball team to the community. In Nashville in 1885, the team was sponsored by the *North American*. James B Jones, Jr., "The Old Southern League Association: First Year, 1885: A View of Early Minor League Baseball in the South, as Seen from a Tennessee Perspective," *Minor League History Journal*, Volume 2, #1 (January 1993): 2. In Seattle, Scott Cline has demonstrated the role of the *Post-Intelligencer* and the *Press* in tying the fortunes of the team to the community. Cline, "To Foster Honorable Pastimes: Baseball as a Civic Endeavor in 1880s Seattle," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Volume 87, #4 (Fall 1996): 173-4. Baseball analyst and historian Bill James blames the failure of Kansas City to maintain a major league team on the "primitive" newspapers of that city, making them "unable to play the role that the press has always played in helping make a team go." Bill James, 24. Despite the warming of the *Journal* to the Lincoln team, especially after the departure of Harry Durfee, James's characterization fits the Lincoln experience in 1886.
59. *Journal*, May 6, 1885.
60. The May 15, 1886 issue of the *State Journal* carries a representative selection of complaints about team dissension and poor play.
61. The home opener crowd was estimated at 1,200 to 1,500, a very good turnout and on a par with the St. Joseph opener, which attracted a crowd of 1,600. Seldom thereafter would a number be given for a game's attendance. Late in the season the *Journal* would complain that the Lincolns would be lucky to draw several hundred at home, while attendance on the road would often top a thousand. It is representative of the change that came over the *Journal* that by season's end it was scolding the citizenry for poor support of the team.
62. *State Journal*, May 26, and 28, 1886.
63. The north wall of Blessed Sacrament School—which approximates the right field line where carriages would park to watch the action—is graced by a mural created by schoolchildren that colorfully represents a ball diamond with game in progress with a stream behind leading into a small lake.
64. For a lively account of Spink's quarrel over Durfee's non-payment of money he had promised Spink for the editor's work in assembling a team, see *The Sporting News*, May 31, 1886. According to Spink, after Durfee realized the two men he had signed on his own—Belden Hill and O.F. Smith—were not of the caliber of the eight St. Louisans the editor had sent, he asked Spink to recruit a further three, which Spink did. Durfee then refused to pay the fares of the three men, after he acquired Swift and Frye in St. Joseph from the remnants of the Red Stockings. One of the three in Spink's second group,

Noelke, did join the Lincolns.

65. Phillips, 24. The Durfees left Lincoln not long after, although Frank returned by 1890. Harry may have died soon after; the 1889 City Directory of Decatur lists a widow of Harry B. Durfee as residing there.

66. Gjerde, 172.

67. Gabaccia, 120.

68. Ducker, 61-2.

69. Quoted in Goldberg, 95.

70. Noel Perrin, *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy: A History of Expurgated Books in England and America* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1992), 19.

71. Quoted in Perrin, 19.

72. "...it was in places like saloons, cigar store, pool halls, and bookmaking establishments—the general hangouts of street corner society—that the game of baseball emerged." Humber, 161. This seems quite overdrawn; we can see that street corner society could not afford to get to the game itself, and middle class reformers did not much care what street corner society talked about or bet on, as they realized that they could, and did, bet on anything. But Humber's dictum grows out of an attitude that reaches back to the 19th century. Spink himself is quoted, "Bribery, contract breaking, dishonest playing, poolroom manipulations, and desertion of players became so common place that the respectable elements of patrons began to drop out of attendance, until the crowds that attended the game were composed almost exclusively of gamblers, criminal element, and men who went to the grounds to bet money on the results," in Kenneth M. Jennings, *Balls and Strikes: The Money Game in Professional Baseball* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 183. The date for this remark is given as an unlikely 1875. Spink himself admitted that he was a better on games, and his *Sporting News* both promoted betting parlors and took their advertisements until Spink turned strongly against pool betting in 1887. A good summary overview of the role of gambling in early baseball is provided by Robert Smith, *Baseball in the Afternoon: Tales from a Bygone Era* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 44-47.

73. Benjamin G. Rader has pointed out that the attendance of women served a psychological need as well as the purposes of economics and propriety, quoting the contemporary New York sports paper the *Clipper* that men required feminine "confidence and approval as a kind of social regulator to the joyousness of our fun." *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 19.

74. *Daily Evening News*, June 1 and 15, 1886.