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*Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County*

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## **Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame**

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**15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701**

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**March 2014**

### **All Aboard!**

Recently, CSHOF member Delbert Mee of Falconer, NY donated an impressive scrapbook detailing the outstanding baseball career of his father Ralph Mee. Among the pages was the following article written almost 70 years ago. It provides a wonderful look at our nation during the WW II years and gives a snapshot of traveling by railroad as almost all Major League teams did at the time. Furthermore it exemplifies the language and writing used by sportswriters of that era. Finally, six (6) CSHOF inductees were on that trip from Jamestown to Wichita: Louie Collins, Walt Brown, Joe Nagle, Leo Squinn, Les James and Lou Brown. Sit back and enjoy the ride. All aboard!

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### **Trip To Wichita Is Described As “Lulu” By Sports Editor**

By Waite Forsyth, *Jamestown Post-Journal*, August 18, 1944

**Wichita, Kan.** – The trip of the Jamestown Booster Club nine, Jamestown New York State semi-pro champions, to this city of 200,000 in the sovereign state of Kansas was a “lulu” in every aspect of the word, but I would not have missed it for a - well - a fairly large check with a farm and hunting lodge thrown in.

When I say the trip was a lulu, I mean just that, or what my contemporaries in age were accustomed to call “a pip” in their days.

First, it was hotter than the regions described in Dante’s Faust (or was it Inferno?) Our Pullman on the Erie, (the Point Culver, where DO they get those titles for Pullmans anyway?) was gifted with air conditioning, the only inlet for air from the exterior, outdoors to you, coming from ventilator valves in the walls.

Since these valves were located in the walls of the lower berths, I was one of the fortunate ones, since I had No. 1 lower, with Rog Dubois riding above me. Across the aisle was Louie Collins in No. 2 lower, with Irv Carlson in No. 2 upper.

But the hot confines of the Pullman were as the shaded woodland nook compared to the day coaches on the Santa Fe, despite the fact the latter are a lot better than most. The humidity, characteristic of the Mid-west states, rose up to blow its breath right into our faces, and our clothes clung to us like the garments enveloping a dancer of the seven veils.

Added to the heat were the innumerable delays along the route. The American railways are being taxed to the limit, owing to the wartime conditions, and there are certain to be holdups, but the railroads are doing a wonderful job and I, for one, am beating about no bushes in saying so.

After breakfasting on the Erie, the Boosters did not have a chance to eat again until we hit Marceline, Mo., about 4:45 P.M. Tuesday, and then only a couple of sandwiches and a soft drink, snatched on the fly from the station restaurant. With all the delays, you might think we had plenty of chances to eat, but we never knew how long the stops would be, as only two of them were scheduled.



**front: “Rogue” Rosean, Jim Rodgers, Ralph Mee, Walt Brown, Irv Carlson, Rog Dubois,  
middle: Duane Shaffer, Bobby Brownell, Warren Mee, Joe Nagle  
back: Leo Squinn, “Lefty” Pratt, Les James, “Murph” Johnson, Lou Brown**

The Santa Fe train was packed with soldiers, sailors, Waves and Wacs, and they rightfully have a priority on dining car service.

Carlson, 17 years old, and next to Dubois, the youngest player on the squad (Dubois is 16) came in for a bit of ribbing at the outset of the trek. The train had not pulled out of the Jamestown station before Walt Brown was piping, “Carlson, you’re wanted on the telephone.” Carlson ran the length of the car before he realized what was afoot.

Of the ride into Chicago, two things stand out in my mind. The pace at which America’s history is geared in the war effort and the farmers’ all-out contribution. Illumination of the war production plants lightened the sky all the way from Jamestown to within 100 miles of the Windy City on Monday night’s ride, and I saw many farmers working in the fields just before night

shut down and many others at work at the first blush of sunset. The steel mills at Youngstown, O. set the sky ablaze with light, a suffusion that could be seen for miles after we passed through the city.

Because we were an hour late pulling into Chicago, we missed our connection with one Santa Fe train and caught the next one west by a whisker, making the transfer from one train to the other on the jump. It was not until we had ridden 100 miles that I became aware there were 16 coaches being pulled at a mile-a-minute clip over the miles between Chicago and Kansas City, and there was not a vacant seat on that train.

It was necessary for us to break up into segments of one, two, three and four in order for us to get seats during this installment of the ride. As usual, I was a fool for luck, drawing a pew next to a window. Murph Johnson was my seatmate, an ideal arrangement as both of us are southpaws.

East of Chicago less signs of drought were visible. Of course, there were exceptions, just enough to prove the rule. But as we progressed westward, the leaves and grass became progressively more verdant. The striking thing is the immensity of the corn crop being grown. They do not plant corn by the acre out here, but by the tens of miles, as befits a dairy and hog country. As far as your vision could reach, you were greeted with the tasseled stalks of the Indians' maize. And everywhere were herds of cattle, mostly Herefords and Holsteins, although the latter were seen mostly in Illinois.

There is an indelible stamp of prosperity and industry about the farm houses and buildings along the rural right of way in these mid-western states. I noted but little difference in the character of the fauna and flora from that of New York State.

Along in the middle of our ride Tuesday afternoon, Murph went calling on other members of the squad, and while he was gone, a Negro sat down beside me and we started talking baseball. He told me he was the second baseman of a Chicago team that was eliminated in the Illinois playoffs for the semi-pro tournament here.

"We had one bad inning, the fourth," he said sadly. "Three runs and the game went right out the window. We have a good club, too."

Glancing through my Muny League scorebook, he spotted a score of the Monarch A.C. Club. "Colored?" he asked. I replied in the affirmative and he grinned. "I knew it," he said. It must be a gift.

The Jamestownners caught their first glimpse of Indians at a place called Henrietta, somewhere in Iowa, the tall corn state. I believe I saw my first Mexicans at Carrollton, a crew of about 25 of the swarthy, grinning little men. There may have been a sullen Mexican among them, but if so, I failed to see one. Everywhere I looked there were broad smiles and flashing teeth.

Bobby Brownell was satisfied when he saw the Mexicans. Not five minutes before he had asked plaintively, "What, no Indians?"

We did not see any of the western country's ten-gallon hats until we struck Kansas City, when we saw both the narrow and the wide-brimmed variety. We had to wait until we reached Wichita to see our first cowboy boots, those short tops that reminds one so much of the roaring, swashbuckling old days of the west.

One state has a penchant for giving its towns feminine names. I saw a Laura, an Ethel and the above-mentioned Henrietta.

We crossed the Mississippi's broad, yellow waters in mid-afternoon and later the Missouri, the Santa Fe span over the latter being breathtakingly impressive.

The ride into Kaycee was uneventful enough, but the last lap was really something else.

After we left Kansas City's up-to-the-minute, all-sufficient Union Station, our train dragged wearily over the miles, with more stops than there are on an organ.

The conductor passed through our car, mopping his face with a large, white handkerchief (I'll confess I was disappointed it was not a bandana). "Whew, that was a lucky one," he said. "I was sure the locomotive had quit on us and we are 30 miles from the town in back of us and 25 miles from the one in front of us."

So slow was our progress that the Chief and the El Capitan, the Santa Fe's crack flyers passed us long before we reached Wichita, although they left Kansas City hours after we did.

We ran through a rainstorm that started as we reached the outskirts of Kansas City and persisted until we were within 10 miles of Wichita. The lightning, both genuine and heat, flashed and the thunder rolled in almost continuous eruption. The train lights were turned out for the 200-mile jaunt, if you want to call it that. I question the use of that word, since it took us from 11 P.M. to 6 A.M. to make that lap. I do not call that jaunty.

But I almost forgot William "Bud" Lockhart. He's a Pullman porter for the Erie and he had us in charge on our run into Chicago.

While we were waiting in the Jamestown yards for the No. 1 to pull in, I joined Leo Squinn and the porter in the vestibule. Bud said he believed he had played ball in Jamestown some 13 to 16 years ago. I took another look at him and I "caught" a flash.

"Didn't you pitch for a Buffalo colored team at Celoron Park back in 1928 or '29?" I asked.

"Sure did," he replied grinning from ear to ear. "We lost a 3 to 2 game here."

I told him Hugh Bedient pitched the game and the hit that gave Jamestown the decision was a two-run single punched out by Rabbit Swanson in the sixth inning. It was a tough game to lose as Bud allowed only seven hits over the route.

"That was my last year of baseball," Lockhart said. "I found I could not keep in condition and hold this Pullman job."

Just another of the great diamond brotherhood.

The Boosters were a begrimed, disheveled bunch of ballplayers as they lined the curbstone in front of Union Station waiting for the cab that did not come, but their morale, as the service men have it, was high.

"All I want is a shower, an egg or two to gnaw on and a bit of sleep and I'll be ready to go," declared Les James, who runs the Mee brothers, Warren and Ralph, a close race for the honors of being the least talkative of the aggregation.

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### **CSHOF addendum - The Rest of the Story**

The grand climax for the weary travelers - no hotel reservations. Taxis were not available at the depot so the men hiked to the Broadview Hotel, where the National Semi-Pro Congress was to have made reservations. However, no rooms had been set aside. Eventually three were made available and the 17-man party shackled up in this limited space.

The Boosters lost in the double-elimination tournament, dropping its two contests to Air Force teams. The first was a 3-2 setback at the hands of the Lincoln (Nebraska) AFB club and the second, 8-0, to the Kearns

AFB entry from Utah.