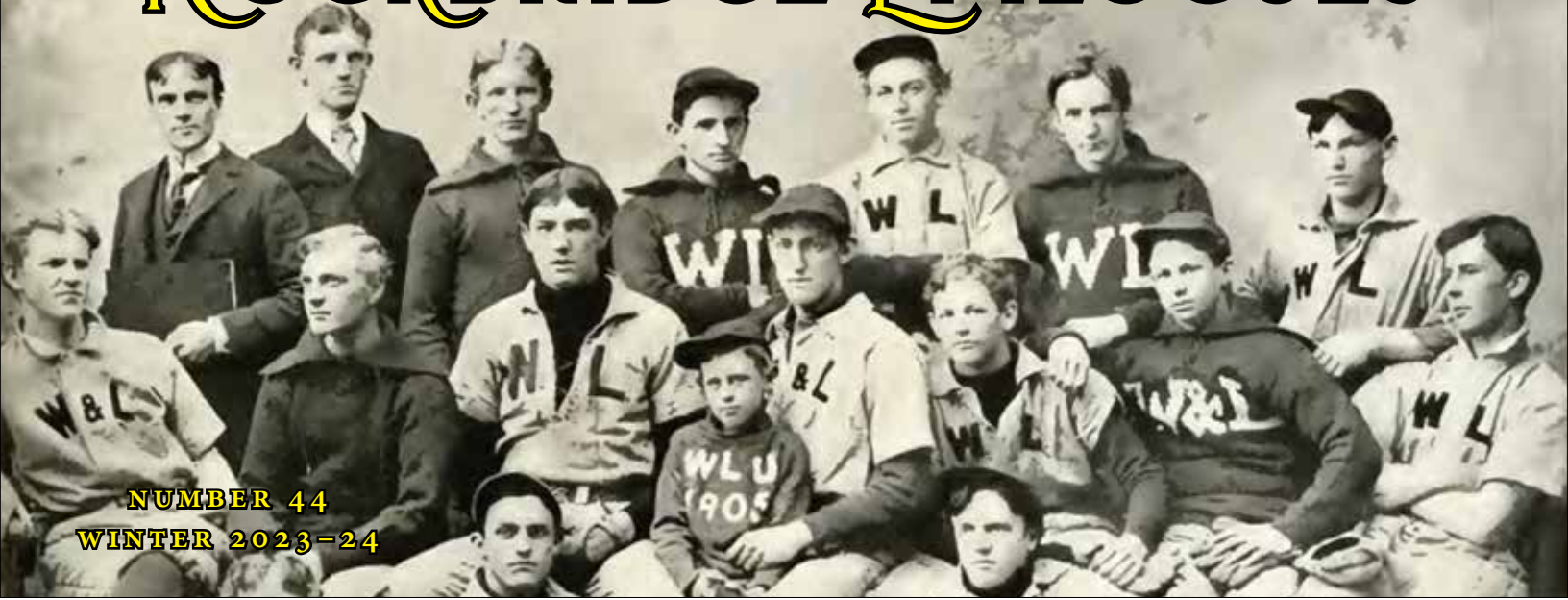


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WASHINGTON AND LEE IN THE BASEBALL BIGS

By
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WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY is one of the oldest universities in the United States, known widely for delivering an outstanding liberal arts education. It has produced countless illustrious graduates in law, business, science, the arts and humanities.

What W&L is not known for is professional athletes, partly because the university dropped subsidized athletics in the 1950s and has competed on an amateur basis since. Yet there was a time from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth when Washington and Lee competed in big-time sports and produced several professional baseball and football players.

In what became the national pastime, what was still Washington College (Washington and Lee after 1870) played in what is likely the first collegiate game in the

South when its Arlington Club faced the Monticello Club of the University of Virginia on May 22, 1868.¹ Washington College also likely participated in the second Southern intercollegiate contest, a “match game” between Washington College and next-door Virginia Military Institute in the spring of 1869, with nine men playing the same positions as players today in a nine-inning contest. Although Washington College won this game by the lopsided score of 36 to 13, there would be many more hotly contested games between the schools during the rest of the century. Washington and Lee also continued to play Virginia fairly regularly.

In the 1890s, intercollegiate sports at W&L became better organized, and the university began to play other colleges and universities. The undefeated 1892 team was

Photo above: Washington and Lee University's baseball team, 1895, from *The Calyx*, the college yearbook

¹ The first nine-man college game was played in New York City between the Fordham Rose Hill Baseball Club of St. John's College and the College of St. Francis Xavier on November 3, 1859.

declared the “Champions of the South,” beating VMI, Virginia, the University of North Carolina, Vanderbilt, Lehigh and others.

Meanwhile, professional teams had been established. The first all-pro team was the Cincinnati Red Stockings, founded in 1869. In 1876, the National League was formed, and by 1892, the league consisted of twelve teams in Boston (the Beaneaters), Cleveland, New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Louisville, Washington, St. Louis and Baltimore. By the time the American League emerged in 1901, minor-league teams regularly fed players into the majors, and college teams supplied teams to the majors either directly or through the minor leagues.

Washington and Lee was one of these, with twelve alums who played in the majors from 1877 to 1947.

JOHAN HALDEMAN, class of 1876, was the first. His entrance into the big leagues was accidental. He had been a good player at Washington and Lee and



Haldeman

joined an amateur team on returning to his home of Louisville, Kentucky, where his father was the owner of the *Louisville Times* and president of the Louisville Grays National League team. In 1877, John Haldeman became a reporter and business manager of the *Times*.
On July 3, 1877, he played his one and only game in the majors. One of the Grays’ infielders was injured, and the team manager asked Haldeman to fill in. This is surely the only time in major league history that a reporter played in a game he was covering. After the game, Haldeman returned to reporting on the Grays, who were having a great year. Suddenly in August, they went on a seven-game losing streak with their star pitcher underperforming. Haldeman openly questioned whether the team had deliberately thrown games. Thanks

to Haldeman’s reporting, four players were eventually found to have taken payment from gamblers, and all four were banned from baseball for life — the darkest episode in baseball until the infamous Chicago Black Sox scandal of 1919.

DAN MCFARLAN was the second W&L alum to play in the majors. Born in 1873 — and destined to become the first major-league player from Texas — he did not graduate from W&L but appears to have attended from 1892 to 1894. Dan played in the minors in 1894–95, making his major-league debut with the Louisville Colonels in 1895. From 1896 to 1898, he was back in the minors, returning to the National League in 1899 with the Brooklyn Superbas, ancestors of the Dodgers and, later, with the Washington Senators. He was typical of many ballplayers and Washington and Lee alums in only having had “a cup of coffee” in the majors. He continued playing in the minor leagues until 1907.



McFarlan

OF THE TWELVE major leaguers produced by W&L, eight of them played in the years between 1908 and 1924, the so-called “Golden Era” of Washington and Lee sports. One of the most entertaining of these players was Thomas “Lefty” George. George pitched professionally for at least thirty-two years, from 1904 until 1944, when he was fifty-seven years old. He pitched on and off in the major leagues from 1911 to 1918 but spent most of his career in the minors. Born in 1886, he began pitching semi-pro ball before graduating from

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high school, and then played pro baseball for a local all-star team in 1904 while completing his high school career. Following graduation in 1905, he attended Staunton Military Academy and pitched brilliantly in the spring of 1906. With restrictions on amateur players being lax at the time, Lefty played pro baseball from 1906 through 1908 for various minor league teams. He apparently played under assumed names, including George Miller, to protect his amateur status while earning money for his private school and college tuition.

George enrolled at Washington and Lee in spring, 1908 intending to pursue a law degree. A rumor began to circulate on campus that George was being compensated for his work on the diamond. A group of students encouraged him to sign a document stating that he was enrolled at the university, had not received any compensation from W&L nor would he. The fact that George had played professional baseball for at least two years prior to his enrollment seemed to bother no one. George went on to have a good season with the Generals, finishing with a 3-3-1 record on a team which went 7-8-1.

In the summer of 1908, Lefty returned to Pennsylvania and pitched for the Pittsburgh Collegians as well as in the semiprofessional Tri-Borough League. Yet, remarkably, in the spring of 1909 we find him back in Virginia at the age of twenty-two, pitching again for Staunton. Finally, by the summer of 1909, he abandoned his academic career and began to play pro baseball full time. He ended the 1909 season with the York White Roses of the Class B Tri-State League. He spent the better part of his life in York, but late in the 1910 season, he signed a deal with the Indianapolis Indians of the Class A American Association, and reported to the team in September. In the meantime, on August 13, 1910, Lefty’s twenty-fourth birthday, he



George

tossed a 1-0 no-hitter against the Harrisburg Senators at the York Fairgrounds.

Lefty made his major league debut on April 14, 1911, pitching for the St. Louis Browns. The Browns lost to Cleveland, 7-5. From 1911 to 1921, he was a steady, occasionally impressive pitcher in the high minors and a so-so performer in the majors. He pitched for St. Louis and the Cleveland Naps of the American League and for Cincinnati and the Boston Braves of the National League. The highlight of his major league career came on September 11, 1915, when he pitched for Cincinnati and shut out Hall of Famer Christy Matthewson and the New York Giants, 4-0.

In 1921, George retired from baseball to pursue a career in business. In 1923, however, he “un-retired,” pitching for the York White Roses while pursuing his business interests. The legend of Lefty George really coalesced during the years he played in the Class B New York-Pennsylvania League for York from 1923 to 1933, when he pitched in 330 games, winning 165 and losing 98. His best season came in 1925, when he led the league with 27 victories and a 2.27 earned run average. He won two more games in the postseason as York defeated Williamsport, 3 games to 1, to claim the league championship.

Lefty’s antics on and off the mound endeared him to fans not only in York but around the league. One of his assets was his unusual, almost comical deceptive motion toward first base. He would dazzle runners with that move, which one writer described as a “human piece of dough twisting itself into a pretzel.” Before the runner could tell what was happening, he had either been fooled into returning to



base while Lefty delivered to the plate — or was picked off. Lefty's prominent Adam's apple also attracted a lot of attention. One anonymous bard of the 1920s wrote:

He's built straight.

Only thing that protrudes is the Adam's apple.

It bobs up and down like a cork on the ocean every time he swallows.

Lefty has the best balk motion in baseball.

Doesn't have to wiggle a finger

All he has to do is wave his Adam's apple, and the runner dashes back to first.

By the late 1920s some league fans began to comment on Lefty's age. Fans in Williamsport called him Grandpa. One day, while pitching in Williamsport, Lefty got his revenge. He was hauled to the mound in a wheelchair, sporting a long, white, artificial beard. He dispatched the wheelchair to the sidelines and, much to the delight of the crowd, pitched three scoreless innings — wearing the beard.

In 1933, at the age of forty-seven, George again retired from baseball, but amazingly returned to pitch for York in 1940. In November 1940, *The Washington and Lee Alumni Magazine* carried an article on the remarkable fifty-four-year-old entitled "Plenty of Snap in Old Rubber Arm." Lefty did not pitch professionally for the next two years, but in 1943, with a shortage of players because of World War II, he was again called upon. In his first starting assignment, he pitched a three-hit shut-out against the Lancaster Red Roses. Altogether, Lefty appeared in twenty-one games for York in 1943, winning 7 and losing 8 — not bad for a fifty-seven-year-old. When he finally hung up his cleats in 1944, George had a lifetime minor league record of 327-287 and a 3.17 earned run average, one of the most remarkable careers in baseball history. As a point of comparison, only two men played in the majors longer than Lefty played in the minors. (Leading the list is the incomparable Satchel Paige, who pitched past the age of fifty-nine.)

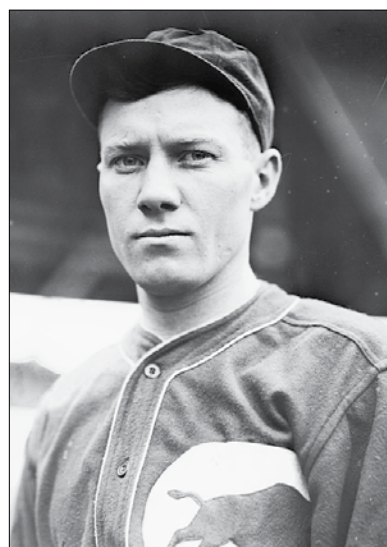
THREE MAJOR LEAGUERS from W&L played together on a remarkable 1912 team, which won nineteen games, the most by any Washington and Lee team



Tompkins



Stewart



Moran

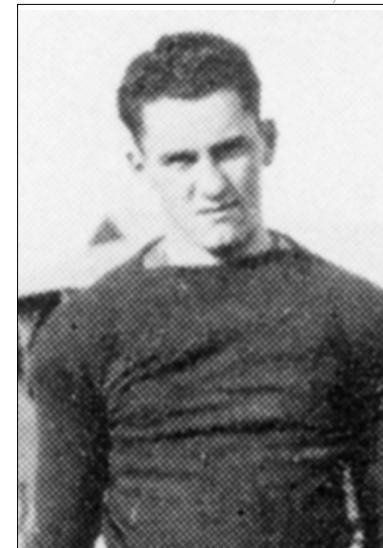
until 1999 and still one of the highest single-season winning percentages in W&L baseball history. The three were Charles "Chuck" Tompkins, 1913 Law; Mark Stewart, class of 1915; and Harry Moran, '14. According to the W&L yearbook, *The Calyx*, both Chuck and Harry helped coach the 1913 Generals' squad, though neither played that year, having exhausted their amateur status.

None of the three achieved great success in the major leagues; both Tompkins and Stewart, in fact, played in only one major league game each. Harry Moran was somewhat more successful: he played for three years. What makes Chuck Tompkins and Harry Moran distinctive is the fact that they played professional baseball while attending W&L's law school. In summer 1912, Harry played with Ty Cobb and the Detroit Tigers, while Chuck, having signed with Cincinnati, played one game with the Reds and several games in the minors.

Tompkins and Stewart: 1913 *Calyx*

AL PIEROTTI, class of 1923, was one of the most remarkable athletes in W&L history. He was an "all-arounder," in the parlance of the day, excelling in four sports: football, basketball, baseball and track and field.² His model was Jim Thorpe, considered the greatest all-around athlete in American history. Al entered W&L in 1914 and won 13 letters in college. He left college in 1918 to volunteer for military service, and played football for the Boston Service All-Stars. After the war, Pierotti, like Jim Thorpe, played professional baseball and football for many years. He is one of 68 men — and the only W&L alumnus — who played both major league baseball and NFL football.

W&L Athletic Hall of Fame



Pierotti

In 1919, Pierotti played with the Providence Grays of the Eastern League, and in 1920 and 1921 he was a pitcher with the Boston Braves of the National League. In 1922, he pitched in the minor leagues, splitting his time between professional baseball and football. In the fall of 1922, he returned full-time to professional football. Meanwhile, he continued to take classes at Washington and Lee, graduating in 1923. He eventually became a teacher and coach in his native Massachusetts, but still found time for other athletic endeavors. After retiring from pro football, Al took up professional wrestling at

² The man who is considered to be the greatest athlete in Washington and Lee history was Al's teammate, Harry K. "Cy" Young. Cy too excelled in four sports and won 16 letters in college — four in each of his four years. Young and Pierotti played together on W&L's undefeated football team of 1914 and the undefeated basketball team of 1917. Cy became a member of the 1917 Helms Foundation All-American Basketball team — he was elected to five athletic halls of fame — and is one of two W&L alums in the National College Football Hall of Fame. After college, Cy chose a career in business and coaching, ending his career as W&L's first full-time alumni director.

a time when there were still some serious professional wrestlers, although even then the sport was beginning to become the circus-like spectacle we know today. In 1931 and 1932, Pierotti wrestled in 30 matches with a record of 15 wins, 14 losses, and one tie. His most famous match came on July 30, 1931, when he wrestled Jim Londos for the world heavyweight championship. Al lost the match but stayed involved in wrestling, refereeing pro matches in the Boston area. Al demonstrated his similarity to Jim Thorpe in having a real barnstorming athletic career, a more common occurrence in the 1920s and 1930s than today.

FRED "PENNY" BAILEY entered W&L in 1914 and played baseball in 1915. In 1916 he was called up by the Boston Braves, with whom he played outfield in 1916-18, compiling an undistinguished record. In 1918, he played for the Toronto Maple Leafs but apparently returned to Washington and Lee in the fall of 1918; he appears in the 1919 yearbook and received his bachelor of arts degree in 1920.



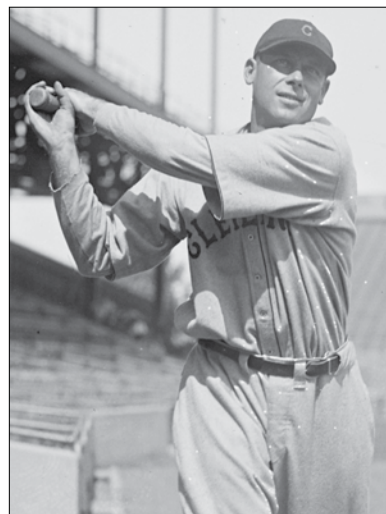
Bailey

FRANK "TURKEY FOOT" BROWER, 1916, was a bird of a different feather. Although he played in the major leagues only for four seasons, he had a distinguished career — one of the best baseball players to come from W&L. Brower entered W&L in 1912 and played baseball the following spring. That summer he played semi-professional ball in Florida, batting over .500. "Turkey," sometimes "Turkey Foot," a childhood nickname, returned to the university and played baseball in 1914, a violation of eligibility rules. In spring of 1914 he signed with the St. Louis Cardinals, but was assigned to minor leagues until 1917. He played outfield,

1920 *Calyx*

first base and pitcher, roles he reprised in the majors. In January 1918 he enlisted in the navy, serving until early 1919, when he joined the Reading (Pennsylvania) Coal Barons of the International League. In 1920 he had a .388 batting average and tied for the league lead in home runs with 22.

He was then traded to the Washington Senators and made his major-league debut on August 4, 1920. He ended the season with a .311 average. In 1921 he had a .261 average, and in 1922 he batted .293 with nine home runs.



Bailey

In 1923, he was traded to the Cleveland Indians, with whom he had perhaps his finest year. On August 7, 1923, he went 6 for 6 in a game with the Senators, tying the American League record at the time. He is one of 117 major leaguers to have recorded 6 hits or more in a 9-inning game. For the season he

batted .285 with 16 homers, one fewer than his teammate Tris Speaker. In 1924, Brower was reduced to pinch hitting and an occasional start. Even so, he had a .280 average in that year, and he also pitched occasionally.

Frank ended his major-league career with a lifetime average of .286, 206 runs scored, 30 home runs, 205 runs batted in and an on-base percentage of .379. In 1925, the Indians sold him to the San Francisco Seals, the upper class of minor league baseball. In 1925, Frank batted .362 and launched 36 homers. The next year he hit .330, with 16 home runs. In 1927–29, he played with the Baltimore Orioles, continuing to hit for average and power.

JIM MATTOX entered W&L in 1918 and played both baseball and football in 1919. His brother, Marvin “Monk” Mattox, arrived at W&L in 1919 and played on the football team with Jim that fall and on the baseball team with him the following spring. In 1921, Jim became

a catcher with Rochester of the International League and had a batting average of .344. In 1922 and 1923, he played with the Pittsburgh Pirates in a limited role. Marvin Mattox played for the Milwaukee Badgers of the National Football League and in minor league baseball. Jim and Monk are the only two W&L brothers of whom one played in the baseball majors and one in the N.F.L.

The last two major leaguers from Washington and Lee were 1937 classmates and members of a great 1935 team, which went 17-4-2, won the Southern Conference, and had an even higher winning percentage than the 1912 team. These two men, Emerson Dickman and Russell “Rusty” Peters, also had the longest major-league careers of any alums, with Dickman playing for five years and Rusty for ten.

EMERSON DICKMAN entered the university and played baseball for three years. He signed with the Boston Red Sox in 1936 and played his entire major league career there (1936 and 1938-41). He spent 1937 with Little Rock in the Class A Southern Association. Dickman enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and spent the war in military service. After the war, Dickman did not return to pro baseball, but he did coach the Princeton team from 1949 to 1951, leading the Tigers to their only appearance in the College World Series in 1951.

When Emerson first arrived with the Red Sox, the polymath catcher Moe Berg described him as “the finest prospect I’ve seen in a long time.”³ In 1938, Dickman threw a shutout against the Indians, and in 1939 he had



Jim Mattox in 1922

Library of Congress

his best year with an 8-3 record and 5 saves. From his photos, it appears that Dickman was also good looking, and one sportswriter compared him to the Hollywood actor Robert Taylor.

RUSTY PETERS had the most successful big-league career of any

W&L alum. Having entered the university in January 1934, he played on both the 1934 and 1935 baseball teams. He went to minor league ball in 1935 and never returned to Washington and Lee. He received a trial from the Philadelphia Athletics in 1936 and impressed owner-manager Connie Mack enough to make the roster. That year he started out with a bang, batting better than .300 and hitting two home runs. He later trailed off in his hitting and was sent down to Columbus, where he did well and returned to the A’s in September. Peters played the entire 1937 season with the Athletics, averaging .260 with 17 doubles, 6 triples, 3 home runs, and 43 R.B.I.’s. One of the highlights of the season was a game against the Yankees that Philadelphia won, 12-6. Russ went 4-5, but lost a perfect day when Joe DiMaggio made a spectacular catch in the eighth inning. Peters was a utility player who covered every infield position. Despite his solid 1937 campaign, he was sent to the Atlanta Crackers in 1938 under manager Paul Richards. Rusty had a great year there in 1939, batting .316 with 38 doubles, 15 triples, 10 home runs, and 88 R.B.I.’s. He led the league in triples and was named to the Southern



1936 Calyx

Dickman

Association All-Star team. Peters later admitted that his time in the minors was good for him: “Connie Mack gave me every chance, but I was just too young and inexperienced. I needed the two years under Paul Richards to become ready for the majors.”

In 1940, Rusty was traded to Cleveland and played there from 1940 to 1944. He was a natural shortstop, but never played regularly at that position for the Indians because the starting shortstop for Cleveland was Hall of Famer Lou Boudreau. In 1945-46 Rusty served with the

American Army in Europe, returning to the Indians in September 1946. In 1947 he was sold to the St. Louis Browns and got off to a fine start, batting .340 in 39 games. Still, he was sent to Toledo for the 1948 season, soon to be traded to Indianapolis, where he played from 1948 to 1951 before retiring. Although he had a major league career batting average of only .236, he was a fine infielder and a consistent hitter. Lou Boudreau said of him: “On any other team in the league, Russ would have been a starting shortstop. But when I became the player-manager for Cleveland in 1942, there were two strikes against him. Russ was a great team player and a great individual. . . He was a good infielder and a consistent hitter. . .”

When Rusty Peters ended the 1947 season, he became the last W&L alum in the majors. Her isn’t in the Washington and Lee Hall of Fame, but perhaps he should be.



Peters

³ Berg would have known: He was a graduate of two Ivy League colleges, spoke 10 languages and spied for the Office of Strategic Services before and during World War II.)

