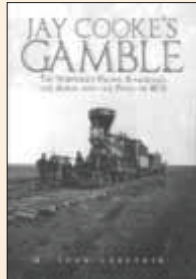


## Jay Cooke's Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic of 1873

By M. John Lubetkin

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. 380 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)



M. John Lubetkin sees the story of Jay Cooke and the building of the second great transcontinental railroad on a larger canvas than simply that of Minnesota. Lubetkin argues that Cooke's determination to finance and build the Northern Pacific had several specific results: the laying of track from Duluth to Bismarck, the creation of Yellowstone Park, the rescue of General George A. Custer from obscurity, the intervention of the British and Canadian governments in promoting the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the solicitation of European immigration to the Red River Valley and North Dakota, the start of the Panic of 1873, and the re-igniting of the Sioux Wars of the 1870s.

Pivotal, of course, is Jay Cooke the banker and financier, the man who had found the money for the federal government to conduct the Civil War. Only someone of his stature and wealth could undertake so enormous a project as the building of the Northern Pacific. Unfortunately, the railroad was plagued by management problems, corruption, and difficult topography and engineering, none of which Cooke was effective in controlling from Philadelphia. Financial matters were complicated also. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 weakened European interest. The *Crédit Mobilier* scandal concerning the Union Pacific Railroad frightened both Congress and the public about investing in railroads. Moreover, newspaper reports of the skirmishing between the army, escorting the Northern Pacific survey parties in Montana, and the Sioux, made the proposition of a railroad look too dangerous. As a result of soaring costs, Cooke lent so much money to the Northern Pacific that he was dangerously overextended. With the stock market faltering in the late summer of 1873, Cooke's partners essentially forced him into bankruptcy in September, precipitating the Panic of 1873 and one of the great depressions in the nineteenth-century American economy.

Much of this is already known. Lubetkin's contribution is his fresh examination of Cooke and his motives, his careful description of the many figures who worked with Cooke, and his explanation of the railroad connection to the growing conflict with the Sioux. Nine of the 18 chapters are a careful examination of the expeditions, mostly in Montana Territory, to find a satisfactory route for the railroad and the consequent clashes between the Sioux and the survey

parties. Lubetkin takes the view that news of these battles in the summer of 1873 tipped the balance when Cooke desperately needed to sell railroad bonds to save his bank and the railroad. In short, Sitting Bull brought down the great Jay Cooke.

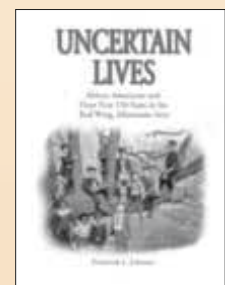
In all of this, several things get lost. The crucial role of the Northern Pacific and the Lake Superior & Mississippi in east-central Minnesota is never explored; for example, the building of the economy through the vast trainloads of white pine lumber carried into Duluth or St. Paul. Immigration into the regions served by Cooke's railroads, which brought in thousands of settlers in the 1870s, is downplayed. Anglo-American relations and Canadian-American relations get slight mention; except for the intriguing question of the role that the Northern Pacific might have had in influencing Canadian politicians laboring to pull the Dominion together, those interested would do well to look at the several histories of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Nevertheless, this is a vivid and compelling book and the first major study of Jay Cooke and the Northern Pacific in more than 20 years.

*Reviewed by Francis M. Carroll, professor emeritus of history at the University of Manitoba. He has published ten books, the latest being Carlton Chronicles, a history of Carlton, Minnesota, written with Marlene Wisuri.*

## Uncertain Lives: African Americans and Their First 150 Years in the Red Wing, Minnesota Area

By Frederick L. Johnson

(Red Wing: Goodhue County Historical Society Press, 2006. 166 p. Paper, \$16.95.)



Frederick Johnson writes that *Uncertain Lives* began from a series of telephone calls and emails about his research on an African American family that had lived in Red Wing.

From this evolved a collaboration with the caller, Craig Patterson, a history professor in California who was interested in his family's roots. Johnson expanded the research to include the African American community in the Red Wing area. What results is a readable and interesting overview of African American life and race relations in one of Minnesota's most important river towns from the Civil War era to today, from a time when the first freed slave had been brought to Goodhue County to work for a farm family to the 2004 mayoral election of Donna Dummer who, ten years earlier, discovered that her grandfather was African American.

Above all, this is a book about the peculiarly diverse forms of race relations that existed within a rural county populated predominantly by farm families of Yankee and northern European stock. For most, the aurora borealis was a more likely sight than a black man on any of the county roads. As *Uncertain Lives* shows, this was a place where whites knew that blacks lived somewhere among them; still there was no singular perception of black people. For example, Robert “Nick” Taylor was described as a happy-go-lucky, Sambo-type farmhand who both amused and vindicated the belief that whites were superior to black people. Jeremiah Patterson (the professor’s ancestor), on the other hand, was a dignified man who came to Minnesota to work the farm of his benefactor, Julia B. Nelson, rose to become her respected business partner in Red Wing, and married the daughter of one of the city’s most prestigious white families. And yet, the Ku Klux Klan openly organized and paraded down city’s streets.

Johnson’s portrait of race relations in Red Wing is both frank and unflattering, and it is somehow refreshing in a canon of local and county histories that tend to be banal, at best, and romanticized, at worst. Nonetheless, for all of the good research and portraits of people and events, reading the book is like viewing snapshots compiled in a photo album. Recording the lives of African Americans in the Red Wing area inevitably and understandably led Johnson to write about race relations, bigotry, and interracial marriage. While he seems willing to be led in these directions, too often he stops short of telling what he thinks it all means.

For example, how did Red Wing residents feel about the Klan? Johnson infers that many (perhaps, most) were embarrassed or intimidated by its boorish activities but does not tell us anything more. In nearby Hastings, authorities thwarted the Klan from marching. What was different about these two river cities? Elsewhere, Johnson reports that Jeremiah Patterson arrived in Red Wing during the 1880s, when blacks seemed to be leaving en masse. What did Patterson find that departing African Americans chose to leave behind? Indeed, why did whites seem tolerant of the interracial marriage of Jeremiah and Verna Patterson but criticize Nelson, Patterson’s benefactor, who bequeathed part of her estate to a black attorney in Washington, D.C.? Johnson gives us no insight into any of this.

In his conclusion, Johnson correctly cites historian Rhoda Gilman’s good example when he admonishes readers from harshly judging people of a different time for their attitudes on race. Perhaps he intended to do precisely this when he declined to analyze the facts he presents. But judgment, to some extent, is inherent in assessing the deeper meaning of events; it becomes a tool of insight and understanding

rather than the consequence of contempt. I am thankful to Johnson for writing about blacks in Red Wing, but I wish he had given us more. I wish he used their history not only to bear witness to their experience but also to provide a means for understanding the community in which they lived. Nonetheless, Johnson has indeed written an important work that provides foundation for more research in the area.

*Reviewed by William D. Green, an associate professor of history on leave to serve as interim superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools. His book on the early history of African Americans in Minnesota will appear in the spring of 2007.*

## **Daughters of the Game: The First Era of Minnesota Girls High School Basketball, 1891–1942**

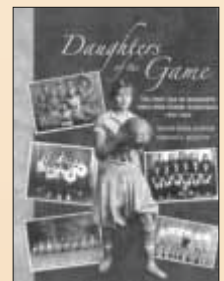
**By Marian Bemis Johnson and Dorothy E. McIntyre**  
(Edina, MN: McJohn Publishing, 2005. 236 p. Cloth, \$29.95.)

## **Stories by Minnesota Women in Sports: Leveling the Playing Field**

**Edited by Kathleen A. Ridder, with Jean A. Brookins and Barbara Stuhler**  
(St. Cloud: North Star Press, 2005. 281 p. Paper, \$16.95.)

The current enthusiasm for girls’ high school and women’s college basketball in Minnesota can make us forget that for 30 years before the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, competitive athletics for females was banned at the local and state level. For 50 years before that ban was instituted, girls’ basketball was a thriving force in most Minnesota communities.

*Daughters of the Game* examines the incredible popularity of girls’ basketball in Minnesota during the first half of the twentieth century. One year after the game was invented in 1891 by James Naismith, a young physical education teacher in Massachusetts, his friend brought basketball to Carleton College in Northfield. From there it spread rapidly throughout Minnesota high schools, attracting both boys and girls. Early concerns that the game was too strenuous for girls led to revisions of the rules designed to lessen exertion for young female bodies. Eventually, basketball was played under a wide variety of rules, as schools were left to set their own standards for girls’ play. In some communities girls’ and boys’ teams played a fast-paced game using the same rules, while in many others girls played a three-court version that



limited the amount of running and dribbling. Regardless of the version, girls' basketball was enormously popular across the state.

The games became community-wide events. Boys' and girls' teams would often travel together to neighboring towns. The teams would play back-to-back games, sometimes in school gymnasiums but just as often on makeshift courts in dance halls, opera houses, or basements. Frequently, the games were followed by dances or town potluck dinners.

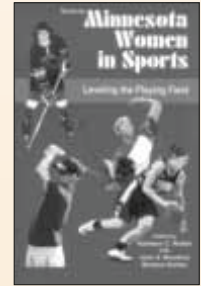
But the enthusiasm for girls' basketball in Minnesota ran against national currents. Amid growing concern about the physical fitness of all American men and women after World War I, organizations such as the National Amateur Athletic Federation began recommending that interscholastic competition for girls be replaced by school intramurals that would encourage all girls to get modest amounts of exercise. Influencing these recommendations was the widely believed fallacy that rigorous exercise and heated competition would upset the endocrine systems of young women and render them sterile. In 1938 the Minnesota State Department of Education heeded the national recommendations and directed school superintendents to drop girls' interscholastic athletics. Within a few years, competitive girls' high school basketball games were only a memory.

The real strength—and charm—of *Daughters of the Game* lies in the personal recollections from the athletes themselves. Johnson and McIntyre interviewed hundreds of former players, some now in their 90s or early 100s, whose vibrant memories infuse the book with their passion for the sport. The sheer amount of material gathered is showcased in the last half of the book, an alphabetical tour of girls' basketball throughout the state. Readers, especially those with personal connections to the teams featured, will delight in finding their own towns and cities in this guide.

Marian Johnson and Dorothy McIntyre are also among those included in *Stories by Minnesota Women in Sports*. This book brings together narratives by 14 Minnesota women who broke gender barriers in the world of sports. Some achieved success as athletes, while others worked tirelessly as teachers, coaches, or administrators. All of them share an undeniable enthusiasm for female athleticism.

The book first features the stories of athletes, including figure skater Janet Gerhauser and tennis player Jeanne Arth, who with partner Darlene Hard won doubles titles at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in 1958. In the midtwentieth century it was easier for women to achieve acceptance in individual sports such as tennis, golf, or figure skating, and not surprisingly, the athletes who excelled in these sports describe few instances of overt discrimination.

In contrast, the second and third parts of the book focus on women who served as teachers, coaches, and administrators. Their narratives describe the far-reaching ramifications of the ban on competitive sports for girls and young women in the years before the passage of Title IX in 1972, which mandated gender equity in all federally funded education programs. The women recount recurring frustration over lack of access to proper equipment and training facilities. They also tell of numerous encounters with what University of Minnesota swimming coach Jean Freeman describes as the “good ol’ boy” network that controlled competitive athletics for much of the twentieth century. In one vivid example of how that network operated, Freeman explains why her female swimmers were allowed only limited access to the university's lone competitive training pool during the 1970s. Women could not use the pool or even be in the building during male practices because the men had a long-standing tradition of practicing without wearing swimsuits. Male administrators were unwilling to challenge this tradition in order to give women greater access to the pool.



As a result of their struggles to bring down barriers to women's competitive athletics, the women featured in these sections offer a much more nuanced understanding and analysis of the structural inequalities of American sports. It is in these parts of the book that the pervasiveness of the discrimination against women becomes most clear.

The last sections of the book detail the changes and growth in female sports participation since 1972, with an emphasis on college athletics and the emergence of organizations such as the Melpomene Institute for Women's Health Research and the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota.

In the last two decades, historians of sport have begun the process of uncovering the story of women's activities in the years before 1972. Seminal works such as Susan Cahn's *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* have provided important syntheses of women's sporting past. Historians still have only the broad outlines, though, of how women's sports operated on a local and community level. These two publications go a long way toward filling in those outlines for the state of Minnesota.

*Reviewed by Ayesha Shariff, who teaches history at St. Paul College. Her dissertation examined representations of gender in twentieth-century baseball fiction.*



■ *Our Readers Write: Mark Davis's "Market Hunters vs. Sportsmen on the Prairie" (Summer 2006) prompted a response from Anthony M. Smith of St. Louis Park. Mr. Smith was surprised to find in the article a photo of his great-grandfather, Wiley Pelham St. John, a sportsman. He tells us that St. John was*

"president of the State Bank of Heron Lake. (He was Ed Grimes' employer.) He was a hunter, to be sure, and died as a result of an accident while hunting. He fell out of his duck boat, was able to reach shore, but died of complications of hypothermia.

"His son-in-law, Morton Wier Smith, my grandfather, was a market hunter whose story is well documented in *The Market Hunter* (1969). 'M. W.,' as he was known, was a founding member and officer and trustee of Ducks Unlimited. He was also a signatory to the 1906 agreement of hunters on Heron Lake that was arguably an early attempt to preserve the duck population of the state. I think that many of the signatories were probably members of the Heron Lake Gun Club."

*Mr. Smith closed his letter by pointing out, correctly, we think, something about the "sportsman" in the article's opening image: "I believe that the person pictured with Charlie Hamilton on page 48 is actually a woman."*

■ More than 100 million acres are protected by the Wilderness Act, wild spaces where "man himself is a visitor who does not remain." The story of how this landmark legislation came to be involves an unsung hero on par with activists like Sigurd Olson and John Muir. In *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, 328 p., cloth, \$35.00), Mark Harvey brings to life this great leader of environmental activism who worked for the Department of the Interior and whose wilderness writing and political lobbying culminated in the 1964 act.

■ *Unequal Contest: Bill Langer and His Political Enemies* by Robert Vogel (Mandan, ND: Crain Grosinger Publish-

ing, 2004, 208 p., paper, \$17.95) offers a fresh perspective on the story of Langer and the Nonpartisan League, the agrarian reform movement described as "the most successful democratic mass movement in twentieth century American history." One of North Dakota's most colorful politicians, Langer served as state's attorney, attorney general, governor, and U.S. senator. Early in his career, he made powerful enemies when he successfully challenged the tax exemption granted to all railroads in the state and to the myriad commercial interests on railroad rights of way. In 1932 he became governor in a landslide victory that put the Nonpartisan League in full control of state government and unleashed the fury of conservative opposition.

In this book, Vogel examines the attack against the politician, culminating in four conspiracy trials against Langer and his associates and a subsequent investigation in the U.S. Senate. Vogel, a trial attorney and former justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court as well as a son of one of Langer's closest associates, brings a unique perspective and expertise to his analysis. An appendix collects and challenges statements made against Langer in previous historical works.

■ The Mighty Mississippi connects two new books by men who know its twists and turns like they do their own hands. *Kenny Salwey's Tales of a River Rat: Adventures along the Wild Mississippi* (St. Paul: Voyageur Press, 2005, 256 p., cloth, \$19.95) offers a sequel to Salwey's earlier collection, *The Last River Rat*, the subject of an award-winning Discovery Channel documentary. In this new volume, the famed storyteller and modern-day Wisconsin hermit relates his intimate experiences with the river, adventures ranging from battling a wary old trout to sharing sleeping quarters with a black bear. Through his example, the "Woodsmen of the Mississippi Backwaters" teaches how to observe, respect, and learn from nature.

Taking a more entrepreneurial approach to the river, Captain William D. Bowell Sr. led the renaissance of St. Paul's

riverfront when he launched the Padelord Packet Boat Company in 1970 on a nearly deserted Harriet Island. In *Ol' Man River: Memoirs of a Riverboat Captain*, edited by Biloine Young (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2005, 224 p., cloth, \$32.00), Bowell charts his life's course, from CCC service to fortune building in printing and plastics to his deepening bond with the Mississippi River. His colorful career is depicted with more than 100 illustrations, including cartoons by Jerry Fearing.

■ The Civil War triumphs of an adopted Minnesotan take center stage in Carolyn V. Platt's article, "Three Cheers for the Cracker Line: William Gates Le Duc and the Relief of Chattanooga," published in *Timeline* (April–June 2005), the journal of the Ohio Historical Society. The article also summarizes Le Duc's childhood in Ohio, his path to Minnesota and position as U.S. Army quartermaster, and his family's straitened circumstances at their home in Hastings after the war.

■ *The Four Hills of Life: Ojibwe Wisdom* (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2006, 120 p., hardcover, \$24.00) teaches children the Ojibwe understanding of the phases of human life from infancy to old age. Author Thomas Peacock and photographer Marlene Wisuri use clear and poetic language and rich illustrations to guide readers through the "four hills" of life—infancy, youth, adulthood, and old age—applying the age-old Ojibwe perspective to the modern world. Lyrical and engaging for children and adults, the book is designed for classroom use and includes learning activities at the end of each chapter.

■ Pearl Marea Schenk's memoir, *Pearl and the Howling Hound Farm* (St. Paul: Ramsey County Historical Society, 2006, 151 p., paper, \$25.00 plus shipping and handling), chronicles a Minnesota life from girlhood on the Howling Hound farm in Anoka to a long and rewarding career in schools throughout southern Minnesota. Schenk's clear and non-nonsense style, complemented through-

out with family photos, brings her memories to life in this engaging story.

■ Remember the Peter and Paul Wendinger Band? The Novotny Brothers? Ivan and his Jolly Dutchmen? Roman Rezac? The Dan Gruetzmacher Orchestra? Chemnitzer concertina music, originating in Chemnitz in the German state of Saxony, has always belonged to the common man. The instrument, able to stand alone with melody and bass, enabled a single performer to provide an entire band for song and dance.

In *The Chemnitzer Concertina, A History and an Accolade* (Northfield: St. Olaf College Press, 2006, 294 p., cloth, \$39.99 plus tax, shipping, and handling), author LaVern J. Rippley lovingly traces the his-

tory of the concertina and the people who enjoyed it in the Old Country after its invention in 1834. European immigrants brought the instrument with them to the New World, where it took hold primarily in the Midwest, first in Chicago, and then in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Popular musicians played it in polka bands that changed the face of American music and continue to perform today.

Rippley's entertaining volume is illustrated with hundreds of photos of concertina clubs old and new, famous performers long gone and many still performing, concertina models and advertisements, and useful excerpts from historical manuals offering playing instructions. Appendixes contain photos and a list of World Concertina Congress

Hall of Fame players, dozens of popular album covers guaranteed to evoke listening and dancing memories, and—for collectors—a color-photograph chronology of the Chemnitzer concertina. This volume will delight fans of this midwestern musical genre.

■ From David R. M. Beck, author of the award-winning *Siege and Survival: History of the Menominee Indians*, comes a sequel, *The Struggle for Self-Determination: History of the Menominee Indians since 1854* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, 290 p., hardcover, \$49.95). Utilizing new archival research, Beck tells the story of a Menominee reservation in Wisconsin from its founding in the midnineteenth century through its next century of power struggles with the federal government. The work reinterprets the conventional history of the tribe, focusing particularly on telling the story from the Menominee point of view.

■ *Zenith: A Postcard Perspective of Historic Duluth* (Duluth: X-Comm, 2006, 208 p., paper, \$19.95) is the first full-color history of Duluth and the western Lake Superior region. Author Tony Dierckins uses gorgeous, hand-colored lithographic postcards to tell the history topically rather than chronologically. This beautiful book brings the region's history to life, from the tragedy of shipwrecks and hangings to the quirky story of how Hotel Duluth's Black Bear Lounge got its name.

■ In *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, 301 p., hardcover, \$29.95), author Stephen Aron re-envisioned the history of the Missouri frontier by treating it as a region of many meetings: where the Missouri and Ohio rivers meet the Mississippi, where Native American groups converged and clashed, where the eighteenth-century colonial powers overlapped, and where the north, south, east, and west of the United States now intersect.

## MINNESOTA HISTORY

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## Charles Albert Bender

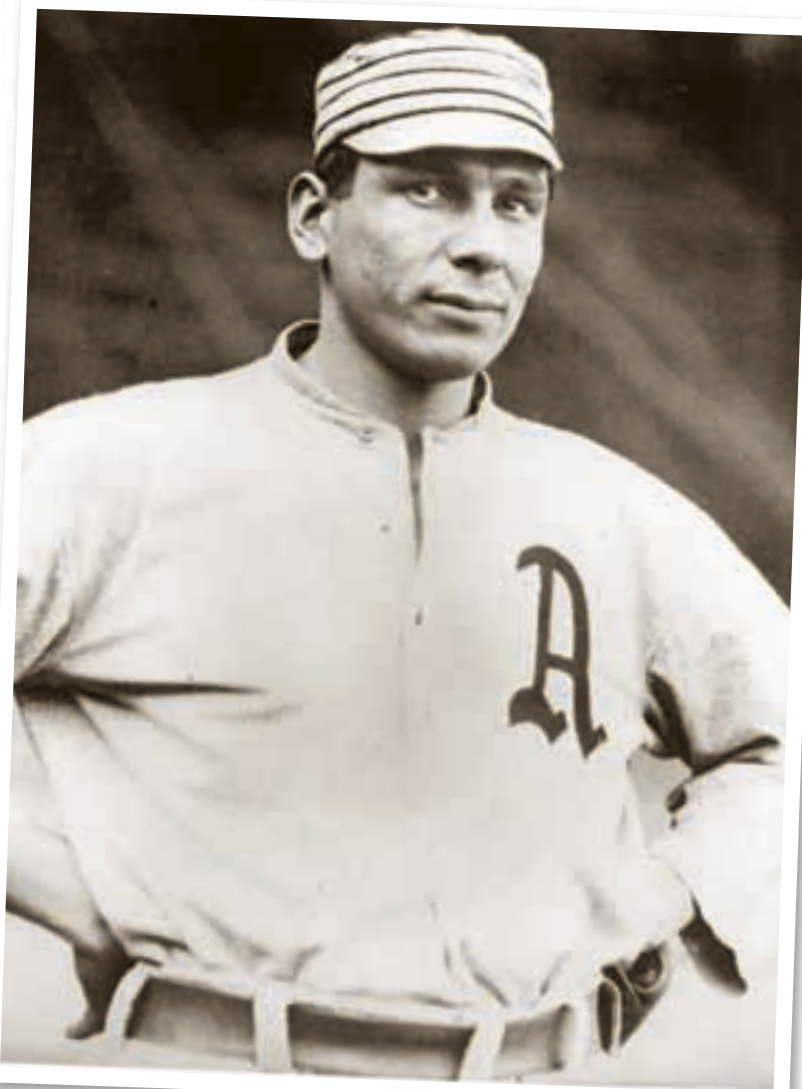


FACING THE CAMERA squarely in his Philadelphia Athletics uniform is pitcher Charles Albert Bender, one of only three native-born Minnesotans in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.\* Native American players were often the target of ridicule in the early 1900s, and Bender was known as “Chief,” a derogatory nickname he shared with other Indian ballplayers of the time.

Bender was born in 1884 on White Earth Reservation near Brainerd, the son of an Ojibwe mother and German father. Standing six-foot-two and an all-around athlete, he was recruited for the Athletics after graduating Pennsylvania’s Carlisle Indian school and attending Dickinson College. A right-hander, he pitched for the A’s from 1903 to 1914 and was a key contributor to the team’s World Series championships in 1910, 1911, and 1913. One of the most celebrated pitchers of his era—in 1910 he threw a no-hitter, went 23 for 5 with an earned-run average of 1.58, and batted .269 with 16 runs batted in—he is also credited with developing the nickel curve, a predecessor to the modern-day slider. Though pitching has changed since his day, Bender’s credo still rings true: “Without control, you are like a ship without a rudder, no matter how much velocity you have.”

Unlike many ballplayers of his era who were hard-living ruffians, Bender was, as one roommate said, “one of the kindest and finest men who ever lived.” Even opponents described him as “classy.” Handling racial slights with grace, he disproved popular notions of inferiority, perhaps easing the way for other players.

Bender was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1954 but died before the August ceremony. Athletic’s manager Connie Mack, winner of more games than any other in baseball history, once said, “If I had all the men



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I’ve ever handled and they were in their prime and there was one game I wanted to win above all others, Albert would be my man.”

—SARAH JOHNSON

*Sarah Johnson is a writer and graduate student at the University of St. Thomas whose love of history is only equaled by her love of baseball.*

Quote sources: Tom Swift, “Do You Recognize This Face?” *Game-day*, July 2003, p. 1; Warren Goldstein, “Chief Bender,” in *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Bender biography, [www.baseballhalloffame.org](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org).

For more on America’s national pastime, visit Baseball as America, a National Baseball Hall of Fame traveling exhibit at the Minnesota History Center November 24, 2006, through March 4, 2007.

\*The other two are Dave Winfield and Paul Molitor.



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