

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

*St. Paul's Biggest Party:  
The Grand Army of the Republic's  
1896 National Encampment*

*Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris*

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**Fall 2009**

Volume 44, Number 3

*The 1924 Junior World Series*

*The St. Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback*

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*Saint Paul Saints first baseman Johnny Neun, right, dives toward a Baltimore Orioles runner in an attempt to tag him during one of the 1924 Junior World Series games played at Lexington Park. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. St. Paul Saints insignia reproduced by permission of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 44, Number 3

Fall 2009

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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### A Message from the Editorial Board

Last summer, St. Paul and Ramsey County hosted the Republican National Convention, which attracted national attention. Impressive as that event was, we may have forgotten other locally held, but nationally important gatherings held here. Our authors explore two of them in this issue. In 1924, the St. Paul Saints defeated a minor league rival, the Baltimore Orioles, to win the Junior World Series at Lexington Park at Lexington and University Avenues. Roger Godin guides us through the story of the series and the excitement it created. In 1896, St. Paul welcomed about 150,000 Civil War veterans and other visitors for the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, an enormously popular group with considerable political influence. Moira and Leo Harris recount the festivities, which included the display of an enormous "living flag" outside the then under-construction Landmark Center. On a smaller scale, we share Nathalie Chase Bernstein's warm story of growing up in the 1930s Jewish community of St. Paul's West Side. P.S. Don't forget, a membership to RCHS (including, of course, this nationally award-winning magazine) is a great holiday gift idea!

*Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board*

## The 1924 Junior World Series

### The St. Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback

Roger A. Godin

By 1920 the concept of matching two high minor league teams in a lesser version of the major league's World Series had finally taken root. An informal series of games between successful minor league teams had been staged in 1904, 1906, 1907, 1917, and 1919, but starting in 1920, the winners of the International League (IL) and American Association (AA) would meet in the Junior World Series (JWS). At stake was the championship of the high minors at a time when such teams were largely strong, independent entities whose play on the field was close in quality to that of the major leagues.

In the 1920s, Orioles manager Jack Dunn had established a dynasty in Baltimore that would bring his team seven consecutive IL pennants and corresponding trips to the JWS. In both 1920 and 1922 his teams had defeated St. Paul in the post-season event and there was little reason to believe that Baltimore's domination would end when the two teams met again in October 1924. The Orioles had finished 19 games ahead of second place Toronto, and while briefly in second place behind Buffalo early in the season, they won the pennant with ease.

Future Hall of Famer Robert Moses (Lefty) Grove led the Maryland team with a 26-6 pitching record and a 3.01 earned run average (ERA). Other significant members of the pitching staff were Jack Ogden, later to see action with two of the St. Louis Browns' better teams in 1928-29, with a 19-6 record and 3.63 ERA; Cliff Jackson (16-8, 3.92); Tommy Thomas (16-11, 4.08); and Ed Tomlin (11-2, 3.61). Second baseman Dick Porter led the IL in batting with a .364 average along with 23 home runs and 125 RBIs. He was injured in late August, but returned in time to play in the JWS. At first base was Clayton Sheedy, who had a batting average of .298 with 16 home runs and 99 RBIs, while the rest of the infield included shortstop Joe Boley (.291-4-100) and third baseman Fritz Maisel (.306-20-88).

The outfield consisted of left fielder John Jacobs (.284-14-70), centerfielder Merwin Jacobson (.308-18-97), and right fielder Tom Connolly (.312-19-98). Both Jacobs and Connolly had been acquired during mid-season trades. The catching was largely handled by Joe Cobb (.320-22-84 who was backed up by Lew McCarty (.308-4-22). Coming off the bench, out-

fielder Harold Clark (.339-9-39) saw the most action.

The 1923 St. Paul Saints had won 111 games, but they still finished second behind Kansas City in the AA pennant race. The 1924 team would win "only" 96 games, but that was good enough for a first-place finish over Indianapolis. Saints manager Nick Allen's pitching staff was led by Cliff Markle (19-9, 2.19), Howard Merritt (19-17, 1.66), Paul Fittery (16-10, 4.37), and Tony Faeth (15-4, 2.00). St. Paul's offensive leader was third baseman Charlie Dressen (.346-18-151), who was destined to become far better known as a manager. First baseman Johnny Neun, a Baltimore native, batted a healthy .353 with 5 homers and 100 RBIs while leading the AA in stolen bases with 54. Neun would subsequently earn a degree



Lexington Park, seen from the air about 1925, was located at the intersection of Lexington and University (diagonal street in the upper left) Avenues. The first ballpark at this site was built in 1897. A disastrous 1915 fire forced new Saints and ballpark owner, John W. Norton, to rebuild the grandstand and bleachers the next year in concrete and iron. Norton also owned the Coliseum dance hall, which abutted the park's fence in left field. Photo by Brown's Photo Studio, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

of immortality after he moved up to the Detroit Tigers in 1925. He is one of only two first basemen in major league history to execute an unassisted triple play when he performed this rare feat on May 31, 1927, against Cleveland.

The rest of the infield included second baseman "Hap" Morse (.273-3-52), and shortstop Danny Boone (.259-4-65). Patrolling the outfield was AA runs leader Walt "Seacap" Christiansen (.314-8-73) in center, flanked by Bruno Haas in left (.298-11-100), and Cliff Lee in right (.382-3-36). Manager Allen, who also played catcher, largely left the duties behind the plate to Leo Dixon (.272-10-67). Also in the dugout was utility infielder Mark Koenig (.267-0-16) who would parley this series into a starting role with the 1925 Saints before joining the Yankees and ultimately playing shortstop for the memorable 1927 team.

Baltimore had trained at Columbus, Georgia, in the spring of 1924, before barnstorming north, as was the custom of the times. The *Baltimore Sun* reported on the team's results:

In pre-season contests they have done well without setting the world on fire. They won the first and then dropped two games to the Philadelphia Athletics. . . . The Oriole second team soundly whipped Reading (IL) upon two occasions, but the regulars took a bad trouncing on a day when nothing went right. . . .

Coming north . . . the Birds were compelled to cancel their game with Atlanta then moving to Durham, where they humbled the Bulls with ease. Two contests were taken from Petersburg of the Virginia League (VL), the Birds downing Richmond (VL) . . . in the last game before reaching this city.

Playing at Oriole Park, the Birds spanked the Phillies . . . 14-3, but lowered [the] colors to the Boston Braves 4-2. . . .<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul did not have the opportunity to face major league opposition during its spring training that year. Assembling at Fort Smith, Arkansas, near the Oklahoma border in early March, the Saints broke camp on March 25 for a twelve-game exhibition tour through Memphis, Birmingham, Nashville, and Chattanooga of the Southern Association. When the tour was over, the Saints had finished with six wins, five losses, and a tie. The

*Sun's* evaluation of the Orioles could have equally applied to them, "done well, without setting the world on fire."

### The Saints' Regular Season

Unlike Baltimore's easy capture of the IL flag in 1924, St. Paul engaged in a tight pennant race all season long. The AA league opened its season in mid-April and by May 1 the Saints were seventh in the eight-team circuit with a 5-9 record as Indianapolis got off to a fast 10-4 start to take the early lead. The locals started to round into form during May and on June 1, they were in first at 27-14 with Louisville trailing at 21-16. St. Paul faltered, however, during June. On July 1 they had fallen back to third with a 39-32 record while Louisville had taken over first. The Saints reassumed the league lead on August 1 at 60-43 while Indianapolis had moved past Louisville into second place at 55-42. A month later Indianapolis had taken over first with a record of 60-43, as St. Paul slipped to second at 76-58. By September 15 the Saints were back on top at 84-62 with Indianapolis second with 82-65, and Louisville a close third at 82-66.

Minnesota baseball historian Stew Thornley recounts how the regular season played out.

. . . The Indians [Indianapolis] held a half game lead with less than a week left in the season when they came to St. Paul for a five-game series with the Saints. St. Paul won four of those games to open up a 2½ game lead. The Saints then wrapped up their season by splitting four games against Louisville, while in Minneapolis, the Millers were sweeping a three-game series from Indianapolis.<sup>2</sup>

The pennant-clinching effort came in the second game of a doubleheader versus Louisville on September 27 as Markle went the distance in the 5-3 win. Manager Allen put things into perspective as reported by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*: "It's too early to start crowing. Our biggest job lies ahead of us. When we have beaten Baltimore, and I am sure this is our year, then we will be able to call it a successful season. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

### The JWS Begins

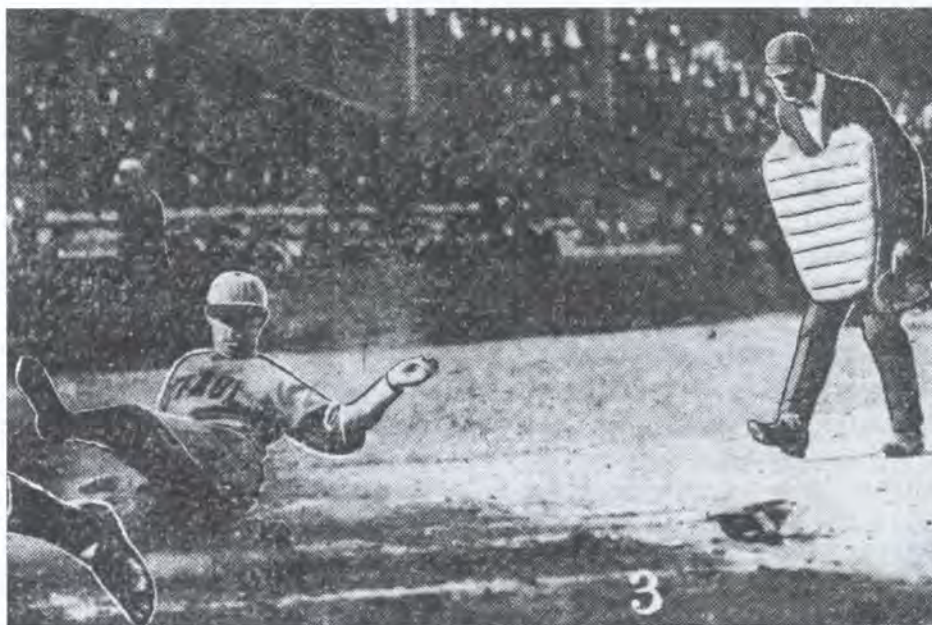
The Junior World Series was to open in Baltimore on Thursday, October 2 and the Saints entrained from Minnesota on the prior Monday evening. After an hour's layover in Chicago, they departed for Maryland in time to work out at the home team's Oriole Park on Wednesday. No Saint was suffering from other than minor injuries as Allen put the team through "a short, but intensive workout . . . today." The newspaper then told its readers,

After the usual infield and batting practice Allen took the men over the field inspecting the distances to the fences and discussing the possible developments from hits to any field. Standing in left, center, and right fields successively, the players discussed every possible play that might develop from balls bouncing off the short fences and a plan of campaign was outlined that pretty comprehensively covered all the possibilities of the opening game.<sup>4</sup>

The series would be best of nine, a format that the major leagues had used previously for its Fall Classic in 1903, and 1919-1921. In game one Allen went with Cliff Markle as his starting pitcher while Dunn, Baltimore's skipper, predictably sent Grove, then known as Groves, to the mound. Allen's decision hardly looked good when the Orioles' leadoff hitter Fritz



Baltimore's ace pitcher was Lefty Grove. He had a record of 26-6 in 1924 and led the International League in strikeouts but was unable to beat the Saints in St. Paul. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



In an early game in the series, Walt (Seacap) Christensen slides across home ahead of the tag. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Maisel sent Markle's second offering over the left field fence to put the home team up 1-0 in the first inning. The locals added another run and took that lead into the sixth when the Saints got to Grove for two runs. The tie held until the top of the ninth when Cliff Lee homered to right to give the visitors a 3-2 lead into the home ninth. St. Paul's good fortune would not hold. After Maisel was retired, Connolly doubled to right bringing up Merwin Jacobson. According to the Baltimore newspaper, Jacobson "fixed his eye on the offering of the St. Paul pitcher, gave a mighty swing at the whirling sphere and caught it squarely with his bat. Before it fell outside the park, a thousand fans were on the field to hail him chief, conqueror and premier batsman of the day."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the 4-3 defeat, the *Pioneer Press* was far from glum: "All in all, even in defeat, the Saints looked like the better team. Their superiority is marked in the outfield and even more so in the infield. The Orioles have an advantage in catching, not because McCarty is any part of the catcher Dixon is, but because he knows St. Paul's hitters and guides his pitcher carefully and wisely." (McCarty had played for AA Kansas City in 1923 and thus knew the Saints' hitters.)<sup>6</sup>

Five thousand St. Paul fans had stood outside the newspaper's downtown offices

on Minnesota Street watching the game's progress on an electronic scoreboard. Others stood in windows and on roofs of adjacent buildings to catch the play-by-play reports. The crowd had taken heart when Lee had put the locals in front during the top of the ninth and called on Markle to preserve the victory. They were predictably disappointed when things turned sour in the last half of the inning.

Allen had intended to start Tony Faeth in game two, but decided against that move as the well-traveled Faeth was a fly-ball pitcher who could be easily victimized by the opposition's big hitters in the small confines of Oriole Park. It was better to save Faeth for the Saints' more spacious Lexington Park and go with Howard Merritt instead. Although Allen had second thoughts about Faeth in Baltimore, Merritt responded in game two with a masterful three hitter and a series evening 6-0 shutout. Dunn had elected to go with Jack Ogden as the Orioles' pitcher. He stayed with him through eight innings and ten hits. The Saints' first run came in the fourth when Neun scored on Dressen's single, but the visitors were unable to increase their lead when Oriole outfielders Jacobson and Connolly made great throws to catch potential Saints' run scorers at home plate.

In the sixth, however, Dressen made the score 3-0 when he homered follow-

ing Cliff Lee's single. St. Paul added a single run in the eighth and two more off reliever Ed Tomlin in the ninth. The *Pioneer Press* summed things up:

Merritt's quiet confidence, his deliberate planning of every move, his calmness growing more serene as the situation grew more critical, was just the tonic the Saints needed.

... with two on and two out Walter Christensen ended the game by a nice catch of Freitag's fly and the Baltimore fans, much to their credit, gave Merritt a genuine ovation, the tribute that was due an artist's masterpiece.<sup>7</sup>

### Called by Darkness

The teams would play thirteen innings on October 4 before game three was called by darkness. The 6-6 tie took only three hours and ten minutes to play, about the time now consumed by some nine-inning games in the majors. Allen had rethought his feelings about not using Faeth as his pitcher for game three and got five and a third innings out of him before he gave way to Paul Fittery, who went the rest of the way. Dunn started Cliff Jackson, but he left in the fourth when the Saints came up with five runs. His relief, Tommy Thomas, finished the game. St. Paul carried a 6-3 lead into sixth when Baltimore tied the game as Fritz Meisel chased Faeth with a two-run homer. Both teams nearly won the game on solo home runs in extra innings. In the Orioles' half of the eleventh inning, Connelly's line drive nearly cleared the fence, but he was held to a double while in the Saints' thirteenth, Dressen's long fly missed going out of the park by a yard or two.

On Sunday, October 5, Baltimore second baseman Dick Porter received a trophy cup prior to game four in recognition of his having won the IL batting title that year, but that offensive honor would not compensate for the fact that his throws to first base when in the field would be directed to someone other than Clayton Sheedy. The Oriole's regular first baseman had sprained his ankle in the tie game, forcing Dunn to use pitcher Ed Tomlin in his place. Both managers returned their game-one pitchers, Grove and Markle, to the mound and the result was another win for the home team.

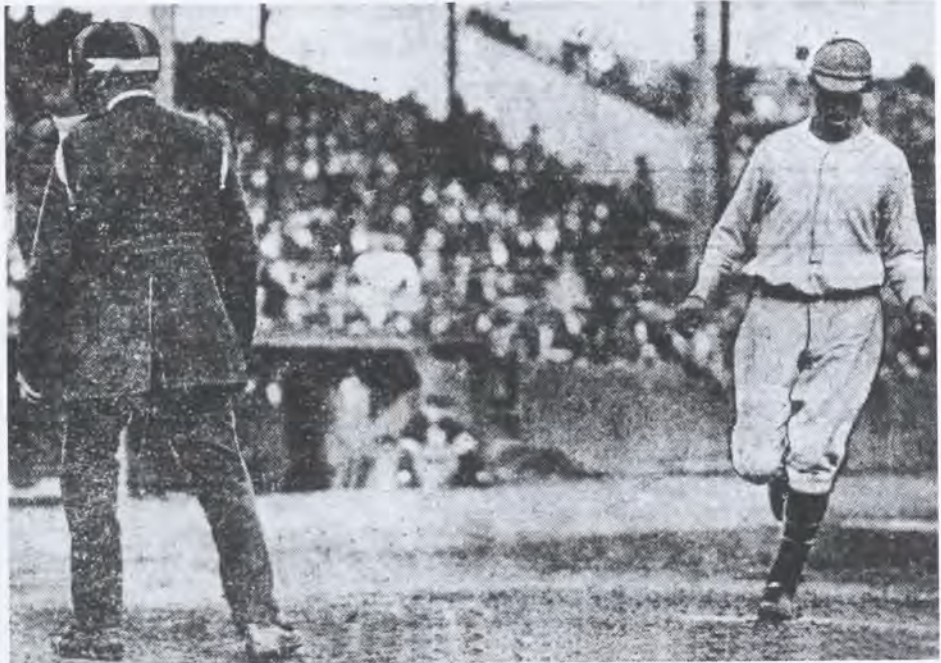
## Game Four Excitement

The largest crowd in the series, more than 10,000, saw the locals build up a 6-0 lead after seven innings, largely as the result of a four-run third inning. Markle was hit hard, walked two batters, and uncorked a wild pitch to put St. Paul in a hole. Allen relieved him with Herb McQuaid, 7-2 on the season, and he allowed Baltimore only one more run before yielding the pitching mound to Oscar Roettger (8-4) in the seventh. The Saints made it interesting in the top of the ninth. Trailing 6-4 with Christensen on second and two out, Grove faced Neun, the local product. According to the *Pioneer Press*,

... Johnny wasted no time. Swinging at the first ball pitched, he drove a tremendous fly to right field. "It's over," shouted the fans, and so it seemed.

Connelly raced for the fence which in that part of the field is only a little over waist high. He threw himself against the barrier[,] reached into the crowd beyond[,] and made the catch. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The game marked the series debut of Mark Koenig who had batted for Morse



When an injury sidelined regular shortstop Danny Boone, Mark Koenig, right, a reserve utility infielder, replaced Boone and helped lead the Saints to a surprising upset of the Orioles. Koenig went on to the major leagues and had a fine career (1925-1936) with the New York Yankees, Tigers, Cubs, Reds, and Giants. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

in the seventh and took his place at second base. The San Francisco native would find himself in the lineup for good in

game five, but not at second base. During batting practice before the final game in Baltimore on October 6, St. Paul's regular shortstop, Danny Boone, was hit in the head by Faeth and Koenig was his emergency replacement. He would also be the Saints' only bright spot in a 10-1 pasting that put them down three games to one in the series.

Game two starter, Howard Merritt, was once again the visitor's starting pitcher while the Orioles countered with George Earnshaw. The latter would match Merritt's three-hit effort for St. Paul in the second game while striking out 11, but Merritt failed to come close to his earlier work. One of the three hits was a solo home run by Koenig in the sixth, producing the Saints' only run as Baltimore pounded Merritt, McQuaid, and Roettger for 12 hits. Not only was St. Paul faced with finding another shortstop, they had to face a new Oriole first baseman.

Prior to the game, the home team had been able to replace Sheedy, who was out for the series, with Toronto's Ed Onslow. Under the series' rules, a team who had a player who suffered a season-ending injury was allowed to find a replacement from an-



Saints second baseman Hap Morris, center, crosses home plate to score a run in game 10 at Lexington Park, which the St. Paul team won 6-3. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

other AA team if the player was comparable.<sup>9</sup> In its account of the game, the *Pioneer Press* explained what happened next:

The game was delayed several minutes while the umpires and managers discussed the substitution of Eddie Onslow . . . for Sheedy. Allen announced that he [would play] the game under protest.

. . . Allen's contention was that Onslow had hit forty points higher than Sheedy and was acknowledged to be a far superior fielding first baseman.

Later the conference moved over to the box occupied by J. Conway Toole, president of the International league, and J. W. Norton, owner of the St. Paul team. Here it was decided that President Hickey of the Association had agreed to the substitution before leaving for [the series]. Under the circumstances, Norton consented to withdraw the protest.<sup>10</sup>

Baltimore had earlier lost catcher Lew McCarty for the series after game two, but the team had a rostered backup in Otto Freitag. They were more than happy to add Onslow for the duration, and he proceeded to hit .318. The Saints, however, while making efforts to obtain either Les Bell, Milwaukee; Johnny French, Minneapolis; or Maurie Shannon, Louisville, came up empty. Bell would have been a more significant addition to the St. Paul lineup than Onslow was to Baltimore as he had led the AA in hitting with .370 along with 17 home runs. In the end Allen had to "settle" for Koenig, but it proved to be a case of getting far more than one could logically expect.

The new Saints' shortstop was twenty years old and in his fourth professional season. He had had some earlier "cups of coffee" in the Minnesota capital over his first three seasons, but this year he had earned a roster spot in a utility role based on a .288 average and 6 home runs in 1923 with Des Moines in the Western League.

### **The Series Moves to St. Paul**

The series now shifted west and the train carrying both teams to the North Star state stopped at Boone's hometown of Pittsburgh where he was immediately taken to the hospital as he complained of a partial paralysis at the back of his neck. The Orioles were in high spirits with

visions of closing out the series within the next three games. The passenger coach carrying the Saints was directly behind the one in which the Orioles traveled, but there was little interaction between the players. The teams departed Baltimore on the evening of October 6 arriving in Chicago the following afternoon. After a

three-hour layover, the train departed for St. Paul's Union Station arriving there at 7:00 A.M. on October 8. Play was scheduled to resume the following day.

Despite their two-game deficit, the *Pioneer Press* told its readers that the Saints players were quietly optimistic that things were now going to turn in their

## *Saints in the City*

In the 1920s baseball players on the St. Paul Saints were almost certainly going to be city residents. The concept of suburbs as we know them today in terms of outlying areas that were primarily zoned for low density, single-family, detached housing was largely alien to the baseball professionals of that era. Except for outfielder Bruno Haas, who resided in far off Afton, downtown addresses were the norm. Pitcher Tony Faeth lived at 455 St. Peter Street and utility man Mark Koenig and pitcher Howard Merritt were his next-door neighbors at 457. All lived in apartments, which were then described as "flats," located above storefront businesses facing the street. Another apartment dweller was pitcher Cliff Markle at 368 N. Lexington Avenue. Shortstop Danny Boone called a private residence at 786 Sherburne home while other players lived at hotels. Second baseman "Hap" Morse paid rent to the Boardman Hotel at 463 Wabasha Street; so did outfielder Walt "Seacap" Christiansen to the Ryan Hotel at 39 W. Exchange, while Saints manager Nick Allan held forth at the St. Francis Hotel, 9 Seventh Place West. Allan was known for his sociability, as the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported: "Every night the lobby of the . . . hotel contains a group of fans surrounding Nick's chair discussing the game and the Saints" (May 15, 1924). As nice a guy as Ron Gardenhire, the current manager of the Minnesota Twins ballclub, appears when interviewed on television by reporters after a game, it is difficult to conceive of him holding forth with fans in the lobby of the St. Paul Hotel!

St. Paul's citizens were urged by Mayor Arthur Nelson on the eve of the season opener on May 1 to "attend the opening game at Lexington park . . . and I believe it is the patriotic duty of every employer to give his employees an opportunity to help welcome this scrappy baseball team. . . ." (*Pioneer Press*, April 30, 1924). Both the Saints and the visiting Milwaukee Brewers were guests of the Junior League at their Follies (stage show) on May 21.

The Commercial Club did their part in boosting the club by hosting a civic luncheon for the team on July 1, just after it had returned from a long road trip, while later in the month third baseman Chuck Dressen was honored with a banquet of his own. Dressen received a diamond stick pin valued at several hundred dollars, which he accepted as a "thrill that comes once in a lifetime," while finding words difficult to come by (*Pioneer Press*, July 25, 1924). Plans were announced on August 1 that outfielder Dick Wade, a mid-season acquisition and a Duluth native, would be honored with an appropriate gift at the game between the Saints and the Minneapolis Millers on September 14. Wade had had a brief "cup of coffee" with the Washington Senators in 1923 before joining the Saints the following season. Although these efforts to honor the professionals on the Saints team in 1924 are representative of the support the team had in the local community, they appear today to be somewhat quaint when compared with the adulation shown many current baseball stars.

favor: "The Saints know they can beat Baltimore at Lexington park. To win four games out of five, however, as they must to attain a championship, is an assignment which will take their best effort and a running start. If, by tonight, the series score stands three games to two, the Saints believe they are virtually starting the fight over again with an even chance."<sup>11</sup>

If one believes in omens, Baltimore got a bad one once the team left Union Station. They soon learned that there were no accommodations at the St. Francis Hotel, located downtown on Seventh Place West, due to a funeral director's convention! The visitors quickly found housing at the Hotel Commodore, located off St. Paul's tony Summit Avenue, and readied themselves for the renewal of the series. So far in the series, the Orioles' pitching staff had fanned 20 Saints with men on base. Grove had won both of his starts while Earnshaw was impressive with his win. With those strikeout numbers, a relative rookie playing at shortstop for the Saints, and an error-prone second baseman in "Hap" Morse (he committed six over the series) the home team's overall chances appeared to be suspect. Thus Baltimore had every reason for optimism despite their brush with the funeral directors.

The game one and four pitchers were at in again in game six, but this time Grove would be beaten and Markle would not figure in the decision. St. Paul got its turn for a pregame presentation at Lexington Park when manager Nick Allen received a new sedan from the fans and just before Johnny Neun stepped into the batter's box in the first inning, he received a silver bat and ball for leading the Saints in hitting.

### Koenig Stands Out

The Orioles carried a 2-0 lead into the bottom of the sixth when the Saints' bats came alive. With one out, Koenig sent Grove's offering to the neighboring Coliseum's roof to draw the home team within one run. That homer appeared to be all the damage done to the visitors, but after Dixon fouled out they moved ahead for good. Paul Fittery, who had relieved Markle in the top of the inning, walked and moved to second on Christensen's single. Then came a catchable fly ball that fell just beyond the infield that opened the scoring

floodgates. Morse, who not only was fielding poorly, but hitting just as badly, got a Texas League single when Baltimore's Porter, Jacobson, and Connelly let his weakly hit ball fall among them. Fittery scored on the play to tie the game. Neun then singled, scoring Christenson, and Morse raced to third. When Grove cut off Connelly's throw from right in an attempt to get Neun at second, the ball bounced off the defender's glove and Morse came in with St. Paul's fourth run.

The home team picked up another run in the seventh on a Koenig sacrifice fly as Fittery closed out the Orioles at 5-2. The *Pioneer Press* heaped praise on the future Yankee:

And [the Saints] were looking for someone to take the place of Mark Koenig.

They combed the country for a shortstop, an experienced infielder who would not crack under the strain of a championship series, one whose throws would be true and, most of all, one who could hit.

They wanted a veteran to play for the youngster who, between cracks of his melodious gum, put St. Paul back in the fighting. . . .

They wanted Lester Bell [for his hitting]. . . . Koenig hit 1,000 for the day.

They wanted Bell because he could range here and there. . . . Koenig ranged as far as Bell and sent some throws that Bell would envy.<sup>12</sup>

Koenig's performance in game seven on October 10, however, was not close to his play in the previous game, as the only effective Saint in this latest contest was center fielder Walt Christensen. He collected two of only three hits that Oriole starter Tommy Thomas allowed as the visitors took what appeared to be an insurmountable lead of four games to two with a 4-0 shutout. Thomas had earlier pitched the near-equivalent of a full game when he relieved Jackson in the thirteenth inning of the 6-6 tie. He had struck out seven on that occasion and fanned 11 in this game while driving in two of Baltimore's four runs with a sacrifice fly and a single.

The sacrifice fly had occurred in the fifth inning and scored Jacobs from third for a 1-0 lead. An inning later the Orioles got to Saints' starter Howard Merritt



When the Saints rallied against Baltimore in the final game of the Junior World Series, the players in the team's dugout cheered with gusto. Charlie Dressen, far right, was their third baseman. Later in his career he managed five major-league teams. The Saints' script logo can be seen on the left sleeve of Dressen's jersey. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

for three runs, which had begun with Jacobson's leadoff triple. Porter then doubled in Jacobson and went to third on Boley's ground out to Koenig. Onslow then singled him in and eventually scored the visitor's fourth run on Thomas's single. Merritt was gone after the sixth as Allen brought in Roettger and McQuade to finish off the game. While they allowed no hits the home team could do nothing against Thomas's blazing speed. The victory put Baltimore one game from the championship.

In what might seem odd by today's standards, before games in St. Paul the Orioles dressed at their hotel and traveled to Lexington Park in taxis. The *Pioneer Press* account of the Orioles' arrival at the ballpark mentioned that the visitors "were greeted with hearty applause when they walked to their dugout." Could this perhaps be an early expression of what has come to be known as "Minnesota Nice?"<sup>13</sup>

### The Saints' Predicament

While the next three games would play out quite nicely for the Saints, their prospects after game seven were hardly bright. This is what the *Pioneer Press* reporter had to say:

Now the Saints are in a desperate predicament. They need to win three games running. Baltimore needs one. This is not wholly impossible, but it must be accomplished against





Catcher Leo Dixon hit a home run in the Saints' game-clinching 6-3 victory. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

the same kind of pitching that has effectively halted the Saints so far, for Jack Dunn has George Earnshaw in reserve and Earnshaw is just as fast as Thomas.<sup>14</sup>

Orioles' manager Dunn may have had Earnshaw, but Saints' manager Allen had Tony Faeth on the mound and Mark Koenig in the batter's box for game eight on October 11. Faeth had given up nine hits in five and two thirds innings in the tie game and in this contest he surrendered ten, but they were scattered in such a manner as to allow a 3-2 victory. The Orioles took a 1-0 lead in the second when Onslow, who had singled and gone to second on an error, scored on Jacobs's single. In the home third Koenig began his magic with a double. After the next two hitters went out and Christensen walked, the fill-in shortstop came in with the tying run when Porter booted Morse's grounder.

In the very next inning Koenig singled Dressen in from second to put St. Paul up 2-1 as Baltimore continued in vain to

score. "The Orioles were putting men on the sacks and getting hits in every inning, but they could not score on Faeth again until the seventh."<sup>15</sup> In that inning with two down, Jacobson walked and reached third on Porter's hit-and-run single. Onslow, who was proving to be a valuable addition to the Baltimore lineup, then doubled bringing Jacobson in with the even-up run. The visitors almost took the lead, but Porter was thrown out at home trying to score on Onslow's hit.

It was Koenig again in the home half of the seventh, as he found himself on third when his hit to right eluded Connelly and bounded off the stands. Dixon then singled him in to give the Saints the lead. While Dunn stayed with Earnshaw through the eighth, Allen went to Paul Fittery for the last two innings and he closed out the Orioles on two hits.

The victory brought St. Paul within a game of evening the series, but the visi-

tors were still in command. Nonetheless, the *Sun* cited a controversial play in the Baltimore third, which might have changed the game's complexion:

The reversal of a decision by Umpire Harry Geisel (IL) really cost the International League champions the game. With one down . . . Jacobson slashed a single past Dressen . . . after Porter hoisted to Haas . . . Onslow came to bat.

Onslow sent a "sinker" to Christensen in center . . . the outfielder came in fast and in a lunge apparently trapped the ball. Jacobson . . . pulled up at third. Geisel ruled that the drive had not been caught, but the St. Paul players, led by Manager Nick Allen, surrounded the arbiter, violently disagreeing. In his dilemma, Geisel appealed to Umpire Ollie Chill (AA), working behind the plate, and when Chill declared that Christensen had caught the ball, Geisel so decided.

This judgment was costly, for it made the

#### Scores and Venues

Game 1:	October 2 • at Baltimore	Baltimore 4 St. Paul 3	(attendance 5,262)
Game 2:	October 3 • at Baltimore	St. Paul 6 Baltimore 0	(3,733)
Game 3:	October 4 • at Baltimore	St. Paul 6 (13 innings) Baltimore 6	(4,919)
Game 4:	October 5 • at Baltimore	Baltimore 6 St. Paul 4	(10,949)
Game 5:	October 6 • at Baltimore	Baltimore 10 St. Paul 1	(3,190)
Game 6:	October 9 • at St. Paul	St. Paul 5 Baltimore 2	(5,487)
Game 7:	October 10 • at St. Paul	Baltimore 4 St. Paul 0	(unknown)
Game 8:	October 11 • at St. Paul	St. Paul 3 Baltimore 2	(unknown)
Game 9:	October 12 • at St. Paul	St. Paul 3 Baltimore 1	(5,552)
Game 10:	October 13 • at St. Paul	St. Paul 6 Baltimore 3	(about 6,000)

St. Paul's Lexington Park at the corner of Lexington and University avenues had a seating capacity of 10,000. The park's dimensions in 1924 were 315 feet down the left-field line, 470 feet to straightaway center, and 365 feet down the right-field line. Oriole Park in Baltimore had a capacity of 15,000 and had the following dimensions: 305 feet to left; 412 feet to center; and 310 feet to right.

third out. In the following inning, Bolley and Jacobs . . . pounded out clean singles."<sup>16</sup>

Predictably, the *Pioneer Press* said considerably less about this disputed call: "It looked as if Christensen had caught Onslow's low liner. . . , but Geisel ruled he had caught it on the hop. Chill, however, overruled the base umpire and the side was called out."<sup>17</sup>

It was, of course, the classic "what might have been" scenario, but reading the press accounts some eighty plus years after the fact, one finds it difficult to accept Chill's overruling Geisel, who presumably had a better view of the play. The intimidation factor from both Allen and the Saints players in front of a home crowd would appear to have played a role in Chill's reversal. Nonetheless, who can say whether Bolley or Jacobs would have brought Jacobson home from third if the play had gone as a hit and the Orioles turn at bat had continued?

### Closing the Gap

Sunday, October 12 was an overcast day with occasional showers and low visibility. It was weather thought to be ideal for "Lefty" Grove's fastball as Dunn went to his ace to finish out the series in game nine. Allen came back with Fittery who had closed out game eight less than twenty-four hours previously. The forty-two-year-old veteran scattered five hits into the seventh inning before giving way to Cliff Markle. By that time St. Paul led 3-1 on single runs picked up in the first, third, and fifth innings. Allen had reshuffled his batting order, moving Dressen to cleanup, placing Lee in right in lieu of Wade and batting him sixth, while Riggert came off the bench to play left and bat fifth. Similarly, Dunn switched Jacobs and Connelly with the former now batting second, the latter seventh.

The moves worked far better for the home team as Dressen went three for four and drove in two runs. Jacobs, who had gone three for four the day before, went hitless, but very nearly put the Orioles ahead in the fifth. Trailing 2-1, with two out and a runner on third he drove a hard liner to Riggert. The *Pioneer Press* described the action in these words: ". . . The first thought was that it would clear the fence. . . . Joe

Riggert . . . when he felt the fence at his back, made a desperate leap and brought the ball down to retire the side."<sup>18</sup>

The play was critical as the Saints scored in their half of the inning and the home team's 3-1 lead held to the end of the game. Dunn had pinch hit for Grove in the fifth, relieving him with Ogden, while Allen stayed with Fittery into the seventh when he brought Cliff Markle in to finish things off. Markle got Maisel to hit a looping fly into left center where Morse made a difficult catch to squelch Baltimore's last rally.

The series was now tied at four games each and momentum, that oft-used phrase which had yet to enter sports' vernacular, was now clearly on the Saints' side. The St. Paul management attempted to get the final and decisive game ten moved to Tuesday when they suggested that attendance would be better, but neither Dunn nor IL President Toole would agree. Was a bigger gate really the basis for the home team wanting the delay or was there a more compelling reason such as perhaps another day's rest for the Saints' projected starting pitcher?

The *Baltimore Sun* sensed disaster looming:

That St. Paul is a hard club to beat on its home grounds is being brought home to the Orioles. They are trying their best to win the series, but the Saints are battling every inch of the way and have [the] most pepper. On Friday, the Birds were leading four games to two, but now are face to face with disaster.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, a sense of cautious optimism came from the *Pioneer Press*,

When the Saints came home from Baltimore, they needed four games out of five to win the Junior world's championship. It seemed a hopeless task[,] but they won three out of four and now stand even with their rivals.

Everything depends upon today's game.<sup>20</sup>

### The Decisive Game

The game seven starters would face each other again in the finale before about 6,000 fans at Lexington Park. Mississippi native Howard Merritt made his fourth start of the series for St. Paul while Tommy Thomas, who had shutout the

Saints for eighteen innings, went to the mound for Baltimore.

Dunn soon found that the Thomas magic had run out as the home team touched him for single runs in the second, third, and fourth innings. The last two tallies came off of solo home runs by Dressen and Dixon. After the latter led off the fourth with his home run on Thomas's first pitch, Dunn relieved with Cliff Jackson who had made only one previous appearance in the series. Jackson was effective into the sixth when St. Paul picked up two more runs as Koenig led off with a double, advanced to third after two outs, and came in on Christensen's single down the third base line. The Saints' center fielder then stole second, advanced to third on Morse's infield hit, and scored when Jackson balked.

Earlier in the fourth the Orioles had seriously threatened when Jacobs and Jacobson opened with back-to-back singles, but Merritt bore down and retired the side. Now laboring into the seventh and clearly showing the effects of twenty-five innings of series work, Merritt faltered. With two on and two out, Fritz Maisel homered to bring the visitors to within two runs at 5-3. That would be as close as they would get as Merritt shut the proverbial door. The *Pioneer Press* gave this account of his pitching prowess that day:

. . . Long after his [Merritt's] curve had stopped breaking and his fast ball had stopped hopping he found enough of the courage and shrewdness, enough hidden power, to deliver the occasional baffling pitches which struck at the heart of the Baltimore attack. Alternately he pitched with caution and with daring[,] but always with consummate wisdom and gameness.<sup>21</sup>

Merritt retired the side in order in the eighth and got the first two hitters in the ninth. Then Freitag singled. Dunn let good-hitting pitcher George Earnshaw, who had relieved Jackson in the seventh, hit and when he grounded to Koenig, the latter's toss to Morse forced Freitag and St. Paul had accomplished the seemingly impossible. The *Pioneer Press* report gave this summary of the Saints' accomplishment:

From the shadow of almost certain defeat to a faint, scarcely discernible glimmer of

hope, from faint hope to actual opportunity and from opportunity to a joyous, explosive, cheer crowned success the Saints fought their way doggedly and bravely to as glorious a victory, capture of the Junior World's series, as has ever rewarded the fighting spirit of a fighting team.

... The suspense that the team has been playing under for the past five days broke loose ... [at] the final out in the ninth. There was a hip-hip-hooray and the dash for the showers began.

Spectators swarmed out on the field and started a demonstration, but they had so tired themselves rooting that their voices failed them. ...<sup>22</sup>

Merritt was the center of attention with his courageous late-inning efforts when it was apparent to all that he was almost beyond fatigue. He gave high praise to trainer John Bridges. He told the *Pioneer Press*: "Were it not for Bridges, I wouldn't have been able to pitch today. My arm was limp Sunday. I couldn't raise it and it seemed as if I never would be able to pitch again, but Bridges worked on it, and this morning it seemed like another arm." Perhaps we now know why the Saints wanted game ten delayed.

### A Summing Up

Merritt had won two games, a number matched by Fittery, who also sported a superb 0.47 ERA. Clearly Mark Koenig had emerged as the Saints' hitting star with a .429 average in seven games with nine hits in 21 at bats. Six of his hits were for extra bases to include two home runs. The Californian's second home run won game six while his key hits in game eight helped St. Paul win the first of the three consecutive games necessary to take the series. St. Paul's other heavy hitter was Charley Dressen with a .351 average along with two home runs and eight RBIs. While Dressen would go on to a journeyman's major league career, it would be his managerial efforts that are best remembered as he took the Brooklyn Dodgers to two World Series, losing both though coming close in losing by a single game (4-3) to the Yankees in 1952.

Koenig, on the other hand, while just as much a major-league journeyman as Dressen, is forever linked with the baseball gods as the Yankees' 1927 shortstop. In

that halcyon year, he hit a solid .285 with 62 RBIs. Over a twelve-year major league career his average was .279 with 443 RBIs while appearing in five World Series, three with the Yankees and one each with the Cubs and Giants. While he told author John Mosedale in his *The Greatest of All: The 1927 Yankees*: "I was never the player I should have been, I was too hard on myself," in October 1924 he was exactly the player he should have been.<sup>23</sup>

The Saints' celebrated that night at a banquet at Hime's Café, on the site of the present-day Travelers' building, in an event open to the public. Allen got the greatest ovation with his players leading the cheering. In only his first year as manager he had done it all and had done it in a spectacular fashion. As to the Orioles, the hometown *Sun*, summarized the outcome matter-of-factly:

The Birds were a disconsolate band as they headed back to Maryland. They fell down miserably in the pinches and the batting was terrible. Porter, bothered by injuries, failed to shine on either defense or attack, while Connelly and Bolley were weak as kittens at the bat.

Failure of Lefty Groves to win a single game here hurt. The lefthander had captured a pair in Baltimore and was counted on to continue his victorious march here.<sup>24</sup>

The analysis is perhaps a bit harsh as Porter did hit .316, but could produce only four RBIs. Similarly Jacobs, not mentioned by the *Sun*, hit .425, but he had only three RBIs. Grove was the most noteworthy of the Orioles' players and Dunn eventually sold him to the Philadelphia Athletics where he produced Hall of Fame (1947) numbers both there and in Boston. He appeared in three World Series for the Athletics and logged a major league career record of 300-146 with a 3.01 ERA.

The *Baltimore Sun* somberly reported that:

No cheering fans greeted the Orioles early yesterday morning at Union Station when the Birds returned after an unsuccessful quest. ...

A few friends and relatives of the players were on hand to greet them, and the Orioles who live here lost little time in reaching home.

... Jack Dunn had little to say, "They

beat us, and that's about all," said the Oriole magnate, and the players in general were reticent in discussing their setback.<sup>25</sup>

The great come-from-behind victory would prove to be a high water mark for the St. Paul Saints. The team's victory in 1924 avenged their defeats in 1920 and 1922, but they would never win another Junior World Series, losing to Rochester in 1931 and Montreal in 1948. Nevertheless, the tale of their triumph over the Orioles would be one of those accounts from a by-gone era of spirited minor league competition that would remain a part of baseball lore forever.

*Roger A. Godin serves as curator for the Minnesota Wild hockey team. His most recent book on early major league hockey was published in 2005. He is also a life-long baseball fan.*

### Endnotes

A different version of this article was previously published in *The National Pastime* 28 (2008): 119-28. A profile of Mark Koenig is in "Forgotten Saint on Yankees' Murderers Row" by Pat Borzi at [www.minnpost.com/patborzi/2007/11/09/31the\\_forgotten\\_saint-on\\_yankees'\\_murderers\\_row](http://www.minnpost.com/patborzi/2007/11/09/31the_forgotten_saint-on_yankees'_murderers_row).

1. *Baltimore Sun*, April 16, 1924.
2. Stew Thornley, *Baseball in Minnesota: The Definitive History* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006), 60.
3. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 28, 1924.
4. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 2, 1924.
5. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 3, 1924.
6. Id.
7. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 4, 1924.
8. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 6, 1924.
9. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 8, 1924.
10. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 7, 1924. The Saints' owner, John W. Norton (1872-1956), was a St. Paul real estate developer who bought the team in 1915. After the Saints' comeback win in 1924, he sold the team but retained ownership of Lexington Park. For more on Norton, see Kristen M. Anderson and Christopher W. Kimball, "Designing the National Pastime: Twin Cities Baseball Parks," *Minnesota History* 58, no. 7 (Fall 2003): 345.
11. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 9, 1924.
12. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 10, 1924.
13. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 10, 1924.
14. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 11, 1924.
15. *Baltimore Sun*, October 12, 1924.
16. Id.
17. Id.
18. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 13, 1924.
19. *Baltimore Sun*, October 13, 1924.
20. Id.
21. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 14, 1924.
22. Id.
23. John Mosedale, *The Greatest of All: The 1927 Yankees* (New York: Dial Press, 1974), 59.
24. *Baltimore Sun*, October 14, 1924.
25. *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 1924.

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The cover of the Official Program for the 30th National Encampment of the G.A.R. in St. Paul in 1896, left, and a Delegate Badge from that convention. The five-pointed star and the "Delegate" bar above the eagle were made of Minnesota copper. The program image is courtesy of the Ramsey County Historical Society. The badge is from the Albert Scheffer family archives, photo courtesy of Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris. For more on the G.A.R. encampment in St. Paul, see the article on page 13.