Guide to the A.G. Mills Papers
1877-1929

National Baseball Hall of Fame Library
25 Main Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

www.baseballhalloffame.org
Collection Number
BA MSS 13

Title
A.G. Mills Papers

Inclusive Dates
1877-1929

Extent
2 linear feet (8 custom boxes for letter books, 1 two-and-one-half-inch manuscript box, 1 five-inch manuscript box)

Abstract
This collection contains correspondence, periodical articles, banquet material, and notes of A.G. Mills between 1877 and 1929. Mills was president of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs from 1882 to 1884, and between 1905 and 1907 he chaired a commission to determine the origins of baseball.

Preferred Citation:

Access
By appointment during regular business hours, email research@baseballhall.org.
Series I, Volumes 1 through 8 available on microfilm.

Reproduction and Use
Copyright restrictions may apply.

Description Control
This collection was organized, arranged, and processed according to Describing Archives: A Content Standard by Cliff Hight in 2006. In preparing the Biographical History, the following sources were consulted: Spalding’s Base Ball Guide, vol. 19:3-13, 22:35-49; A.G. Mills, Clipping File, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York; Washington Post, 29 August 1929, 3; and New York Times, 28 August 1929.
Kate Putirskis applied Encoded Archival Description to this finding aid in 2006. Cliff Hight reviewed it in 2006.

Related Archival Materials
In the same repository includes: Albert Spalding Scrapbooks, BA SCR 42, vol. 1-2, available on microfilm.

In other repositories includes: Abraham G. Mills papers, 1793-1929, bulk (1863-1929), at the New York Public Library.
Biography

Colonel Abraham Gilbert Mills was born on 12 March 1844 in New York, New York. He attended Union Hall Academy and graduated from Jamaica High School in Jamaica, New York. From his boyhood Mills played baseball, including a stint in right field with the Atlantic Base Ball Club of Jamaica. When the Civil War began, he enlisted as a private in the 165th New York Volunteers, also known as the Second Duryee Zouaves. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1864, and honorably discharged in 1865. His later rank of colonel was honorary. In 1869, Mills graduated from the Columbian—later George Washington—Law School in Washington, D.C. Mills was admitted to the D.C. bar, but never practiced law there. While in the capital, he organized the Olympic Base Ball Club and played alongside Nicholas E. Young, who would later succeed Mills as president of the National League.

In 1872, Mills married Mary Chester Steele and they had three daughters, Francis Steele Mills, Ellen Suydam Mills (Mather), and Mary Chase Mills (Lyall). His wife died in 1922, after which he lived with his daughter Mary and her family.

A.G. Mills became prominent in baseball circles in 1876 after proposing that the league ball clubs should have a reserve clause that protected the teams from losing players to better-financed clubs. He acted as the National League’s counsel in the late 1870s, and succeeded William A. Hulbert as league president after Hulbert’s death in 1882. Mills authored the first National Agreement, which included the first reserve clause that stipulated that players could not deal with other teams between 1 April and 20 October. When team owners allowed players to return in 1884 after the players had ignored the reserve clause, Mills resigned as league president. He was succeeded by Nicholas E. Young, and was the last league president to not receive a salary.

Mills worked as a salesman in the elevator industry for many years. He started in the late 1870s with the Hale Elevator Company, which represented the Otis Elevator Company in Chicago. Otis later purchased Hale and from 1898 until Mills’s death in 1929, he was the vice president of sales.

In 1905, sporting goods magnate Albert Spalding proposed the creation of a commission, known since then as the Spalding Commission or Mills Commission, to gather all possible information on the origins of baseball. A.G. Mills chaired the commission, which included Morgan G. Bulkeley, Arthur P. Gorman, Alfred J. Reach, George Wright, Nicholas E. Young, and James E. Sullivan as secretary. The commission issued its final decision in 1908 that baseball originated in the United States and that Abner Doubleday devised it in Cooperstown, New York, in 1839.

Other positions that Mills held included member and president of the New York Athletic Club; organizer of, and advisory counsel to, the American Olympic Association; commander of the Lafayette Post of the Department of New York, Grand Army of the Republic; secretary of the Survivors’ Association of the Lafayette Post; officer of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion; officer of the French Legion of Honor; member and
president of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks; and member of the Union League Club, American Museum of Natural History, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also was active in the Amateur Athletic Union for many years.

A.G. Mills was eighty-five years old when he died of heart disease in Falmouth, Massachusetts, on 26 August 1929.

Scope and Content
This collection consists of correspondence to and from A.G. Mills between 1877 and 1929. Other materials include copies of National League meeting minutes, newspaper articles, banquet menus, and handwritten notes from Mills. The letter books contain copies of correspondence from Mills between 1882 and 1896, a time frame that includes his league presidency and Spalding’s world tour of 1888 and 1889. Prominent figures who corresponded with Mills include: Henry Chadwick, John T. Doyle, Charles H. Ebbets, John A. Heydler, William Hulbert, Harry Pulliam, Francis C. Richter, Arthur H. Soden, Albert Spalding, James E. Sullivan, John K. Tener, Mark Twain, Harry Wright, and Nicholas E. Young.

System of Arrangement
Series I contains correspondence from A.G. Mills.
Series II consists of correspondence to A.G. Mills.
Series III relates to the National League.
Series IV encompasses newspaper articles, banquet materials, and handwritten notes.

Controlled Access Terms
These records are indexed under the following terms in the National Baseball Hall of Fame Online Library Catalog, also known as ABNER. Researchers wishing to find related materials may wish to search under the following terms:

Personal Names
Doyle, John T.
Ebbets, Charles H., 1859-1925.
Force, Davy, 1849-1918.
Hulbert, William Ambrose, 1832-1882.
Richter, Francis C., 1854-1926. (b. 1854)
Spalding, A. G. (Albert Goodwill)
Sullivan, James E.
Wright, Harry, 1835-1895.
Young, N. E., 1840-1916.

Topics
Mills Commission
New York Athletic Club
World Tours (Baseball) (1888-1889)
World Tours (Baseball) (1913-1914)

Corporate Names
Brooklyn Dodgers (Baseball team)
Major League Baseball (Organization)
National League of Professional Baseball Clubs
Otis Elevator Company.

Forms
Agreements
Clippings
Correspondence
Lecture notes
Letter books
Menus
Minutes
Periodicals

Container List

Series I. Out-Going Correspondence, 1882-1929
This series contains eight volumes of letter books and six folders of correspondence from A.G. Mills between 1882 and 1929, and is arranged chronologically. Much of the material pertains to baseball, but some of the volumes of letter books relate to other facets of Mills’ life. During the years 1907 and 1908, one will find letters that Mills wrote while chairing the Mills Commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>December 1882-January 1884</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>January 1884-July 1884</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>July 1884-April 1889</td>
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<td>March 1891-August 1891</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>August 1891-December 1892</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>December 1892-July 1896</td>
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Box 1
Folder 1 Loose Material, 1882-1889
Folder 2 1907-1908
Folder 3 1909-1913
Folder 4 1914-1916
Folder 5 1917-1920
Folder 6 1921-1929
Series II. Incoming Correspondence, 1880-1929
This series covers the correspondence that A.G. Mills received between 1880 and 1929. It is arranged alphabetically by the last name of the writer, and contains letters from prominent baseball figures. Others that corresponded with Mills included staff members from the New York Public Library who were interested in his manuscript and book collections.

Box 2
Folder 1  A-Dou, 1884-1925
Folder 2  Doy-E, 1905-1926
Folder 3  F-J, 1880-1922
Folder 4  L-P, 1884-1929
Folder 5  R-So, 1882-1915
Folder 6  Spalding, 1884-1923
Folder 7  St-Y, 1882-1918

Series III. National League, 1881-1926
This series contains material related to official National League functions. It is arranged chronologically, and consists of minutes, copies of minutes, resolutions, and dinner invitations, as well as speech material from dinners marking the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the National League in 1916 and 1926, respectively.

Folder 8  1881-1926

Series IV. Articles, Banquets, and Notes, 1877-1928
This series composes newspaper and periodical articles, banquet information and lectures, and notes of A.G. Mills between 1877 and 1928. Some of the articles relate to the New York Athletic Club, as well as Mills’ work in baseball. Banquet information includes material related to the celebration of the returning 1889 world tourists.

Folder 9  Articles, 1890-1925
Folder 10  Banquets, 1889-1928, one banquet program is Mills dinner speech as emcee.
Folder 11  Notes, 1877-1920
Folder 12  Articles, correspondence, opinions, various or unknown authors
Origins of baseball; Mills Commission note
Copy of Graves letter, Apr 3, 1905 (bl-215.46)