Collection Number
BA MSS 2

Title
Three-I League Organizational Records

Inclusive Dates
1937-1962

Abstract
These Organizational Records are housed in two archival boxes and include annual reports, minutes, rules, financial material, memorandums, and other sundry items illustrating minor league baseball history in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and other Midwestern states from 1937 through early 1962.

Provenance
These items were donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in 1971 by the Cedar Rapids Cardinals of the Midwest League.

Access
By appointment during regular business hours, email research@baseballhall.org. Available on microfilm.

Preferred Citation:
BA MSS 2, Three-I League Organizational Records, 1937-1962, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY.

Grants: CL-10021-01 (IMLS) – microfilm

Historical Background
The Three-I League was a Class B minor league that operated in the Midwestern United States from 1901 through 1961. In the old classification system, a Class B minor league was the highest level of the "low minor leagues," typically Classes B, C, D and E. Officially named the Illinois-Iowa-Indiana League, the league quickly became known as the Three-I. It was one of the leading minor leagues in the Midwest and Mississippi River Valley for the first 60 years of the 20th century. Though the league stood for a span of 60 years, it witnessed four interruptions. Play was suspended for the 1918 season during World War I, 1933-1934 and 1936 during the Great Depression, and 1942-1945 during World War II. Though it disbanded after the 1961 season, the Three-I League remains one of the most significant low minor league operations in the history of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues.

Three-I League Presidents

1901-1903  Michael H. Sexton (Rock Island, Illinois)
1904-1907 Edward Holland (Bloomington, Illinois)
1908-1909 Michael H. Sexton (Rock Island, Illinois)
1910-1917 Albert R. Tearney (Chicago, Illinois)
1918 Did Not Operate
1919-1924 Albert R. Tearney (Chicago, Illinois)
1924-1932 L. J. Wylie (Decatur, Illinois)
1933-1934 Did Not Operate
1935 L. J. Wylie (Decatur, Illinois)
1936 Did Not Operate
1937-1942 Tom Fairweather (Des Moines, Iowa)
1943-1945 Did Not Operate
1946-1950 Tom Fairweather (Des Moines, Iowa)
1951 Vern McMillan (Terre Haute, Indiana)
1952-1959 Hal Totten
1960-1961 Vern Hoscheit (Sioux City, Iowa)
1962 Ken Blackburn (Cedar Rapids, Iowa)

Scope and Content
The Three-I League Organizational Records are housed in two archival boxes and are arranged alphabetically by folder title with the Information Folder arranged to the front and 1954 Season Documents arranged to the rear. These records span the history of the league during some of the minor league’s most trying and successful periods in 20th century: the Great Depression, World War II, and the post-war boom and decline. These records document primarily the operation and financial aspects of a low minor league, colorfully illustrating the reasons for the decline of the Three-I league and general minor league decline in the 1950s. Of greatest note are the 1954 Season Documents including league memorandums, reports and other items that provide a comprehensive overview of the activities of the Three-I League that year. Users should note that attendance figures and other team-specific information may be found in the three types of material contained within these records: annual reports, minutes and publications. Annual and financial reports may be found as separate documents or as a component of the minutes. The annual reports that were only included in the league minutes have not been duplicated and remain solely within the minutes. The Information Folder includes various histories of the league, written primarily during the 1940s.

The Three-I League Minutes are extensive and document the organizational history of the league from 1937 through the decision to cease operations in January 1962. Throughout this period, these detailed minutes provide excellent documentation of the operation and finances of the league and its teams. The minutes appear to be comprehensive, including numerous annual and special meetings of the league. These minutes provide strong detail on the matters concerning the entire league, including: rule changes, playoffs, All-Star games, status of existing teams, applications of additional cities for league membership, one-cent taxes on attendance to pay for league office activities, election of officers, and
other concerns of the league. The minutes also include numerous annual and financial reports that may not be found elsewhere in these records. While these minutes document the overall strength of the league, a great deal of information may be found that documents individual teams. Minutes include numerous reports given by the teams discussing their organizational and financial status. More extensive information on team operations may be found when the teams were struggling financially or when cities were applying for membership in the league. Other noteworthy items discussed in the minutes include the resumption of the league after World War II, the establishment of mileage pools, and the status of other regional minor leagues such as the Class A Western League and the Class D Mississippi-Ohio Valley League (now the Midwest League). The relationship between the Midwest League and the Three-I is well documented in the minutes, as the two leagues expanded and overlapped territories during the 1950s. The discussions about the Midwest League document attempts by both parties to split the territory, create two Class C leagues, and the discussion of tampering between the leagues in competition for successful franchises. Also of note were presentations by sporting goods representatives from the leading companies to select official league baseball and other goods, and the subsequent votes for companies by the league directors. These vendors include: Rawlings, Wilson, Spalding, Worth, and McGregor.

Annual Reports include extensive financial and attendance information for the league during the period from 1938 until 1961. In many cases, the annual reports include information found in part or in its entirety in the minutes. Specific information found in these reports include the league's financial statements, trial balances, attendance reports, receipts for playoffs and special dates, mileage pools and other relevant information. Financial information found in the annual reports generally documents the operation and expenses of the league office, not individual teams. One exception is for the expenses and revenue for the Moline (Illinois) franchise from August 15 to September 5, 1941 (when the league took over operations of the club). Mileage pool information documents the league's various formulas to balance the high cost of transportation among the league franchises. In 1939 and 1940, the annual reports include specific attendance for the playoffs, Fourth of July and Decoration Day (Memorial Day). The 1940 report includes the pool established to split the money generated by clubs on the same two holidays. The 1954, 1956 and 1957 annual reports are more extensive, providing extensive information on the league operations not found in the other years. All three have long prose summaries of the previous season, extensive comparative attendance and financial figures for the period after World War II. League President Hal Totten expanded the annual reports with these prose sections and comparative financial information to provide league members with more information to explain, and place into the proper context, the decline in league operations. Also included is a detailed accounting of every league office activity such as: correspondence, telegrams, phone calls, transaction wires, etc. The accounting of league office activities provide an exceptional and unique source for documenting the day-to-day activities of a minor league office in the mid-1950s.

The 1954 Season Documents include bulletins, memorandums, minutes, publications and other sundry items comprehensively documenting public and private matters of the league. These documents were generated primarily by league president Hal Totten and maintained in his original order. The memorandums are particularly rich, documenting the communication between Totten and the clubs, team management, team managers,
scorers and umpires. Club memos include meeting agendas, general updates, clarifications of National Association issues and issues of concern to the team management pressing items concerning the league. These issues include St. Louis Cardinals broadcasts of their games over radio stations in league cities, the financial troubles of the Burlington club, the new rule requiring players to remove gloves from the field when at bat, and statistical information on games affected by bad weather from 1950 through the 1954 season. Management memos are primarily financial in nature, including a 1954 survey recording detailed elements of a team's operating expenses and revenues and an application form for the Cedar Rapids Indians Knot-Hole Club. Managers' memos specifically address issues of the game on the field, outlining what they can do to support the league and boost the level of play. Of note are two sternly written memos citing problems with excessive profanity (June 24), and lengthy games with gross delays (June 30). Umpires' memos include assignments, general information, and a six-page Spring bulletin that outlines the league's professional expectations for the umpiring staff.

Promotion documents include extensive ideas and examples on how teams can improve the exposure in the community. These items are especially important given the general decline of minor league baseball during this period. While Totten draws upon numerous clubs for the examples, he primarily draws from Jim Meaghan (Cedar Rapids), and Carl Roth (Peoria). Examples from Cedar Rapids include welcome letters and tickets sent to new residents, a team ink blotter sent to people making the newspaper, and a four page newsletter entitled "Let's Boost Cedar Rapids and Our Indians." Examples from Peoria include a 1954 promotional calendar, and extensive quotes from a letter of Bishop William E. Cousins, celebrating the return of professional baseball to Peoria. Other items include Burlington's Baby Brownies promotions with a replica of a certificate signed by St. Louis Browns owner Bill Veeck, and information on the Miss Three-I League Contest. Press & Radio information includes league press releases on all issues, playoff rosters, promotional information on the All-Star Game, and on the league's explanation for the general drop in attendance (July 25). Service & Publications materials include correspondence concerning a bus transportation contract dispute raised early in the season, the 1954 Dope Book, and the All-Star game Guide which includes information on players including Roger Maris (Keokuk) and Hall of Famer Luis Aparicio (Waterloo). Other items include Financial Materials, Publications, and Rules. Financial Materials are not comprehensive, but include numerous items documenting the finances of the league and member clubs in the late 1950s. These items include the league's response to the 1958 United States Census of Business, profit and loss statements for all teams from the 1958 season and other financial information for 1958 and 1959. Publications primarily include guides produced by the Three-I League between 1954 and 1957. Mimeographed and stapled, these guide books include the "Dope" Book, Record Book, and Club Rosters. The Dope Books provide slightly different information for each year (1954, 1955 and 1956). Information found in the "Dope Books" provide a strong supplement to the national guides available for minor league baseball and include game schedules, club and press information, attendance figures, mileage traveled by the teams, umpire rosters and other relevant league information. The 1955 Dope Book includes a radio and TV station Directory for Three-I League teams including the names of broadcasters for Three-I League and Major League games. The Record Book, prepared in 1956, includes single season individual and club records. Of primary note in the Record Book is an
alphabetical list of every Three-I League manager. The 1956 and 1957 Club Rosters include previous season records for the players, personal information, extensive biographies for the 1957 managers and the roster of umpires for the league. Also included is the program for the Burns-Fisher Night on August 16, 1939 at Fans Field in Decatur. That night celebrated the 30 year anniversary of the 26 inning Three-I League game won by Decatur 2-1 over Bloomington. By 1939, it was still the longest game played in professional baseball history. Rules and Constitutions include printed and manuscript playing rules, as well as specific rules for the Shaughnessy Playoffs.

**Container List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1      Information Folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2      Annual Reports, 1938-1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3      Financial Material, 1938-1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4      Minutes, 1937-1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5      Minutes, 1948-1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6      Minutes, 1957-1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7      Publications, 1939-1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8      Rules, Constitutions and By-Laws, 1952-1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1      Club Memos, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2      Management Memos, 1953-1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3      Managers Memos, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4      Minutes, 1953-1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5      Press and Radio, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6      Promotions, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7      Scorers Memos, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8      Service (and Publications), 1954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>