A.C. PHONNEY MARTIN: MORE ABOUT THE FIRST CURVE

National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

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

www.baseballhall.org

This guide to the collection was prepared by Laura Lay, Steele intern, in June of 2009 and reviewed by Claudette Burke.
Collection Number:
BA SCR 10
BL-33.43

Title:
A.C. Phonney Martin Scrapbook: More about the First Curve

Inclusive Dates:
1845-1933

Extent:
1 archival box (1.3 linear feet)

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

Abstract:
This is a scrapbook compiled by Alphonse Case (A.C.) “Phonney” Martin concerning the invention of the curve ball. This scrapbook consists of typed manuscript pages, clippings, correspondence and handwritten notes. The contents of the book reflect Martin’s work in positing that either Bob Matthews or Martin himself, rather than Candy Cummings, was the first to pitch a curve ball. The scrapbook is divided into chapter-like sections and also includes several miscellaneous articles.

Acquisition Information:
The collection was donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in 1943 by Mrs. Isabelle Martin.

Preferred Citation:
A.C. Phonney Martin: More about the First Curve, BA SCR 10, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY.

Access Restrictions:
By appointment only. Available Monday through Friday from 9am to 4pm.

Copyright:
Property rights reside with the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. For information about permission to reproduce or publish, please contact the library.
History:
Phonney Martin was born Alphonse Case Martin on August 4, 1845, in New York, NY. It is said that Martin was the first to pitch the slow curve ball, a pitch which he developed while he was in the union army in the civil war. He played some form of organized baseball dating back to the 1860’s. Prior to the civil war, Martin joined a schoolboy baseball team known as the “Unions.” When the war broke out he enlisted with Hawkins’ Zouaves, Ninth Regiment, New York. It is here that Martin first started using his famous curve ball pitch. Martin was wounded at Antietan and discharged from the war. Soon after, he began pitching for amateur, then professional teams.

When professional baseball teams were formed around 1869, Martin joined the New York Mutuals. After several seasons with the Mutuals, he became a member of the Eckfords of Brooklyn. He then returned to the Mutuals for several seasons and became a baseball hero in New York. After his time with the Mutuals, he pitched several seasons for the Troy Club, retiring afterward.

Martin pitched the ball with a twist of the fingers and the wrist, manipulating the ball like no other pitcher at the time. When Albert H. Spink wrote his book, “The National Game,” he described Martin’s slow ball as follows: “His slow ball came to the plate at such a snail-like pace that it nearly drove the batsmen crazy, and when they got ready to hit it good and hard, it seemed to carom away from them. His delivery set spectators as well as opposing batsmen nearly wild. The Martin ball also was a tantalizing affair to the catcher for it often curved away from him just before crossing the plate.”

Phonney Martin died, at the age of 88, May 27, 1933 at his home in Hollis, NY. He was survived by his daughter, Estelle Philips, with whom he lived; his son, Alphonse Martin, and to grandchildren, Walter and Wilbur Philips, all of Hollis, NY.

Source: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Biographical Files

Controlled Access Terms
These records are indexed under the following terms in the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s Library catalog. Researchers wishing to find related materials may wish to search under these terms.

Corporate Names
National League
New York Knickerbockers
New York Mets
Brooklyn Atlantics
New York Mutuals
Eckford Baseball Club
Union Baseball Club
Star Baseball Club
New York Giants

Personal Names
Martin, Phonney
Matthews, Bob
Cummings, Candy

Subject Headings
Pitching (Baseball)
Curve ball pitching
Baseball 19th century
Correspondence

Content List
Box 1

Martin: More About First Curve
Martin First Curved Ball
The Origin of the Curve in Baseball, 1870
History of A.C. Martin
The History of Baseball, 1867
Baseball, 1871
Knickerbocker Baseball
Knickerbocker Baseball
Knickerbocker Baseball: Officers 1845-1866
Baseball: Mutual, Eckford, Atlantic, Union
Mutual
Brooklyn Atlantic
Note: Fragile, pages glued together

Union
New York Metropolitan, 1880-1887
The New York Team: Kaleidoscopic Era in Giants History
The Star Baseball Club
Note: Several pages glued together

Eckford Club
Baseball: The History, Statistics and Romance of the National Game
Miscellaneous Articles
Newspaper clippings (includes Martin’s obituary)