

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
Department of History

**The Triple Play**  
Twentieth Century Representation of Baseball in Wisconsin

Jacqueline McKay  
Advising Professor: Jane Pederson  
Spring 2013

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# Abstract

Wisconsin has a rich history rooted in immigrants, industry, and sporting culture, all of which played a role in the history of baseball. Baseball's history throughout the state has changed because of major historic events but also with the guided assistance of three memorable men. The role Raymond Gillette, Henry Aaron, and Allen Selig played in the history of Wisconsin's story in the sport of baseball gives it a unique past, and rare evolution of the game unmatched by other states. Following the story of these men and the shift in baseball's importance during World War II, Wisconsin's story of baseball has changed from being a part of industrial worker culture, to the sport as a major industry itself. Each of these men has provided a different aspect of the sport and their importance is equal, yet unmatched.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my professor Dr. Jane Pederson as well as Erin Devlin, my mentor on the project. Without their guidance and support with the paper I would have had a much more difficult, and less enjoyable experience. I would also like to thank Raymond Gillette, Henry Aaron, and Allen Selig for the tremendous effect that have had on baseball in the state of Wisconsin, and although I do not have the resources or connections to thank them personally, their impact is what made this project possible. I would also like to thank my mom for putting up with my rather consistent phone calls regarding some stressful situations I've had during the completion of this paper.

I would like to dedicate this paper to those mentioned above as well as my very supportive boyfriend, Shawn Held, who has put up with my madness while completing this project. His love for baseball and the Milwaukee Brewers really pulled me into the sport and created the motivation for me to research and produce this paper.

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# Introduction

The triple play; probably one of the most rare plays to ever happen on the baseball field. Such a play is defined as a team playing defense obtaining all three outs of the inning in a single play. There are a number of different scenarios that may result in such a rare occurrence, yet in the history of recorded Major League Baseball, between 1876 and 2012 there have only been 689 triple plays.<sup>1</sup> This unique, yet amazing play is like a shooting star, or a Haley's Comet, if you're lucky enough to see such an event live, it's one you will never forget. The people of Wisconsin, if they've been watching, have seen a triple play in the evolution of baseball. Wisconsin's history in baseball has grown progressively with three major steps, each resulting in an addition to the game that has gone unnoticed by many fans outside of the state. The impact of Raymond Gillette, Henry Aaron, and Allen Selig are the direct representation of each turn in the "triple play" for Wisconsin's 20th century story in the sport. Regardless of the ability for fans nationwide to see Wisconsin's evolution in the sport, their game of baseball has forever been affected by it.

In the late 1880's to the early 1920's the United States urban cities flooded with incoming immigrants, mainly for Eastern Europe. Especially in the Midwest, the growth of industry and manufacturing drew immigrant workers into an American society they longed to be a part of. While the demographic structure of the country was shifting, so was the importance and focus of recreation and professional sports. Baseball was seen as an almost entirely Midwestern and Eastern phenomenon in the late 19th century, which allowed it to be so successful in these areas

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<sup>1</sup> "Summary List of Baseball's Triple Play's (1876-Present)". *SABR Researchers*. (April 23, 2012): [http://tripleplays.sabr.org/tp\\_sum.htm](http://tripleplays.sabr.org/tp_sum.htm) (accessed March 5, 2013)

of highly populated immigrant workers.<sup>2</sup> The process of Americanization and acculturation to the white-collar workers in small urban cities truly created a population susceptible for the growth and popularity of professional baseball. This was not solely because of the professional atmosphere itself, but because the integration of baseball into the work place in industrial recreation programs allowed these workers to personally become involved and attached to the game. A highly respected student of sport, Hugh Fullerton wrote:

Baseball, to my way of thinking, is the greatest single force working for Americanization. No other game appeals so much to the foreign-born youngsters and nothing, not even the schools, teaches the American spirit so quickly, or inculcates the idea of sportsmanship or fair play as thoroughly.<sup>3</sup>

This Midwest trend of industrial baseball leagues played a major role in the development and growth of the Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls area, where the Gillette Tire Safety Company (later U.S. Rubber Company and UniRoyal) fostered numerous teams of employees. Baseball was well suited for the working American life-style because it is an exciting game that took under two hours to complete and did not prevent fans or players from engaging in a full day's work.<sup>4</sup> The initial impact and implementation by Raymond B. Gillette of baseball in Eau Claire in 1916 was the first major step taken in the path of baseball's history in Wisconsin, and its eventual path to Milwaukee.

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<sup>2</sup> Steven Riess. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Atl. Const.*, 18, July 1919. See also the article "Baseball Field: The Real Melting Pot," *New York Morning Telegraph*, n.d., quoted in *Sp. News*, 26 April 1917; Lambe, "Game of Games," p. 550. The mayor of Bridgeport, Connecticut, reported that the sport helped foreign-born workers in his city assimilate. "Editorial," *BBM 25* (June 1920): 314. quoted in Riess, Steven. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT. 1980), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Riess. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 16.



**Figure 1.** Eau Claire Gillette Plant Team, 1924. Company Newsletter, September 1924. *Source:* Uniroyal collection 1917-1992, Company Newsletter, Folder 69.

After the stock market crash hit in October of 1929, unemployment in the United States rose to an all-time, reaching over 25%. While all American and immigrant workers

struggled to find work to support themselves and their families, the number of recreation programs

was reduced considering the persuasive needs to draw employees to work was filled by the lack of available employment. Although baseball continued to be played as a leisure activity and at the professional level, the involvement of industrial employers with sponsored baseball teams and leagues saw a steady decrease in urban areas such as Eau Claire. Minor league baseball seemed to become a more important part of the game, as well as a crucial part of entertainment for the urban unemployed workers. The Eau Claire Bears who competed in the Northern League Class C division, called Eau Claire home beginning in 1934. This level of baseball provided affordable, competitive baseball for the viewing pleasures of those in the city who longed from continued involvement in the sport.

In early 1940 with the start of the war, many American's underestimated the role their country would eventually play in the fighting. The depression still burdened the hindered economy and the financial situation the country was in, but baseball on the minor league and professional level continued to prosper at a steady rate. Along with these leagues, employer

sponsored teams such as Gillette continued to play on a leisure level, although much less than the decade prior. After the devastating blow to Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States turned immediately onto the offensive and into the full fledged World War. The War had a number of impacts of the country, but it's impact on the sport of baseball was quite negative. Entering the war brought America almost immediately out of the depression as the need for laborers grew in sync with the numbers of draftees and those who openly enrolled to fight in the war. Company's shifted their production focus to more war-related items, such as weapons, supplies, and armor for the troops. Gillette Tire Safety Company was only one of the many industries who directed their employees and production toward the war effort, not only by adjusting their factories to produce artillery instead of tires, but also with the large numbers of employees who took up arms and reserved their place on the front lines of battle. The attitude towards entering the war was much different than the first World War, where politicians such as Robert La Follette opposed the United States involvement in the war. Instead, citizens and business owners passionately embraced the effort as a patriotic call to arms and a chance for immigrants to defend their new homeland.<sup>5</sup>

As the war raged on, American's found themselves with a new idea of patriotism and loyalty to their country, nearly all of which were connected to the war effort and promoting national security. Focus shifted from being an active, respectful member of a community, to honoring the freedom our country stood for along with the unaltered attitude that nothing can destroy us. Immigrant status in small urban towns such as Eau Claire seemed to fade into the backdrop, as the highly concentrated German population enlisted against its Motherland to protect the United States. The past idea of entertainment and sport was often thought of as a

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<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society, *World War I, At Home and In the Trenches* under World Wars and Conflicts. [http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-037/?action=more\\_essay](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-037/?action=more_essay) (accessed April 12, 2013)

potential distraction to the people at home working for the war effort. In a memorable exchange of letters between then baseball commissioner Kenesaw Landis and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the President expresses his opinions on the continuance of baseball at all levels during the war, although the commissioner believed it may be best to suspend the sport for the upcoming seasons.

I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before. And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before. Baseball provides a recreation which does not last over two hours or two hours and a half, and which can be got for very little cost. And, incidentally, I hope that night games can be extended because it gives an opportunity to the day shift to see a game occasionally.<sup>6</sup>

As the war continued on, the numbers of baseball players involved in the war effort only increased. Over 500 professional major league baseball players enlisted to fight, along with over 4,000 minor league players.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of war involvement, industrial production and baseball events proceeded on, and with the conclusion of the war in 1945, America and its people had a slightly altered, and renewed sense of Americanism and patriotism. The impact of this change in the sport of baseball in Wisconsin meant less of a need to persuade people to be content with their role in labor and industry, which in turn showed a decrease in baseball participation in industrial leagues, and an increase of these citizens as baseball fans. Especially in the years following the war, baseball was defined as a truly American game, whose most famous players laid down their bat and glove to pursue a uniform of a different kind in America's armed forces. The war also opened doors for the mixing of races in the sport of baseball. It was strongly

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<sup>6</sup> President Franklin Delano Roosevelt letter to Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Landis, "Green Light Letter", January 15, 1942, President's Personal File 227: Baseball, folder: 1939-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), Hyde Park, NY. cited on [http://www.baseball-almanac.com/prz\\_lfr.shtml](http://www.baseball-almanac.com/prz_lfr.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Zillgitt. "World War II Era Baseball Now a World Away." *USA Today*. (July, 19, 2004): [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/columnist/zillgitt/2004-07-19-zillgitt\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/columnist/zillgitt/2004-07-19-zillgitt_x.htm) (accessed February 7, 2013)

believed that if the colored man could stand beside the white man on the front lines of battle to defend our country, there is no reason he should be segregated on the baseball diamond.

On 1947, the color barrier was broken when the Los Angeles Dodgers started the first African American player, Jackie Robinson. Although it was a difficult adjustment for many American fans to make, in Wisconsin the change was rather openly accepted and in the years to follow, Eau Claire was home to its own baseball star of African American descent. Henry Aaron played only one summer of baseball in Eau Claire in 1952, and that was enough to solidify his role in baseball's history not only in Eau Claire, but the state of Wisconsin as a whole. The minor league affiliation Aaron played for that summer was in preparation of a team move and with new stadium construction in Milwaukee along with their rising Wisconsin star, the Boston team chose Milwaukee as its new home for the 1953 season.<sup>8</sup> The season broke records for the prior Boston team and when Hank Aaron made his debut in 1954, the state of Wisconsin and the city of Eau Claire became a population of ecstatic fans that took pride in their role of fostering the soon-to-be all-star. Aaron's role in Wisconsin baseball created die-hard fans out of those citizens who spent their own youth playing the game of baseball in open fields and with industrial teams such as Gillette Tire Safety Company.

Hank Aaron and the Milwaukee Braves life in Wisconsin was sadly short lived, and in 1965 the team was once again, relocated to Atlanta where they still reside today. Hank Aaron, a current member of the MLB Hall of Fame, played twelve seasons in Wisconsin, followed by nine seasons in Atlanta, then returning to Milwaukee for his final two seasons. As he desired, he retired as a member of the Milwaukee Brewers, and today is honored with the display of his retired number in Miller Park. With the move from Milwaukee to Atlanta, Wisconsin citizens

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<sup>8</sup> Johnny Logan. "Welcome to the Show." *Milwaukee Braves Historical Association*. <http://www.milwaukeebraves.info/1953.htm> (accessed February 7, 2013).

found themselves lost in the booming world of professional baseball with no affiliation to foster their historic love of the game. This was felt the deepest by one Milwaukee man, Allen Selig, who had grown up with the minor league Milwaukee Brewers, as a fan who was captivated by the Milwaukee Braves and Hank Aaron's presence in his home state. Determined to bring a major league team back to Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee, Selig gained respectful, wealthy partners and founded an organization dedicated to the cause. In 1970 he was finally successful. With the bankruptcy of the Seattle Pilots, Selig was able to acquire the team and relocate the organization to Milwaukee, where it still remains today as the Milwaukee Brewers.

From the days of Raymond Gillette's industry sponsored baseball programs, to the legend of Hank Aaron and his summer season in Eau Claire, to Allen Selig's Milwaukee Brewer organization, the transformation of baseball in Wisconsin has been a gradual yet drastic one. From the guidance and involvement of these three men, Wisconsin's history of the sport has been transformed from one rooted in employee-played leisure games, to the multi-billion dollar industry of Major League Baseball today. The path for baseball down highway 94 leads from its roots in industry to the creation of the sport as an industry itself.

## History of Baseball in Industrial Recreation

For many years historians did not study popular sporting institutions such as baseball because they believed such institutions were well known and understood by the public. It was believed that detailed analysis would not advance any new knowledge or explain historical

problems.<sup>9</sup> Fortunately, a great deal of attention has been given to the sport of baseball since 1920, and this research has shown what a large role the public has in making the sport successful. Citizens from urban settings whose town was not host to professional teams are of special importance when understanding the growth of the sport across America, and not only in largely populated towns who hosted a professional team. Along with the change in attitude and perception towards baseball, there has also been gradual changes in the American labor scene from industrial paternalism to an industrial democracy.<sup>10</sup> With these changes came the implementation of welfare capitalism programs for employees.

Welfare capitalism came in many forms from the introduction of sports clubs, teams, and social clubs, along with providing educational and cultural activities for employees. The most popular of these programs is known by historians as industrial recreation, programs and organizations created by employers in industry for the benefit of their employees. None of these were as successful in created loyal employees and loyal sports fans as the industrial sponsored baseball teams. Sport ideology convinced employers that baseball would make their employees healthier and more productive. It would teach values that were conforming with the needs of their white-collar work place. It was also believed that baseball would be a suitable alternative to keep their young male workers away from saloons and gambling, in turn promoting values such as sobriety, virtue, and hard work. These values would in turn produce reliable, cooperative, and self-sacrificing employees that would remain loyal to their company while also advertising the company's name and creating a positive image of the company and the city.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Steven Riess. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Fredrick W. Cozen and Florence Scovil Stumpf. *Sports in American Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 54.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Riess. *Sport in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 63-64.

While baseball suited the desires of the employers, the public also saw baseball as a true reflection of contemporary society, a truly democratic sport that epitomized all that was best in America. It only made sense that it could be successfully utilized by Americans hoping to preserve social order and acculturate its people into the traditional value system.<sup>12</sup>

By 1900's prominent companies such as the Pennsylvania Railroad, National Cash Register, and U.S. Steel had implemented sports programs for their employees. President of U.S. Steel, Andrew Carnegie believed leisure-time activities influenced workers mental, physical, and moral development.<sup>13</sup> Since large percentages of the industrial laborers in the United States were immigrant workers who moved their lives for the chance at improving their status and making something more of themselves, these sports programs offered these immigrant men the chance to build relationships with their co-workers and members of their community. Sports programs that brought workers together over the sport of baseball promoted strong qualities of Americanization. America saw baseball as a sport that promoted order, traditional values, and efficiency; it brought immigrants closer to the American culture by allowing them to look at an idealized past. These baseball teams helped foster social integration by promoting assimilation and company pride, teaching respect for authority, and most importantly by providing factory workers with exercise and diversion.<sup>14</sup>

In the aftermath of the intense labor movement in Chicago, the industrial focus of urban living had begun its journey north to settle in the relatively small Wisconsin city of Eau Claire. In 1910, Eau Claire County had a population of 32,721, with the city of Eau Claire itself playing

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<sup>12</sup> Steven Riess. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 165.

residence to 18,310 members.<sup>15</sup> The city that was less than 1 percent of the population of Chicago in 1910 (which was home to 2,185,283 citizens<sup>16</sup>), would soon be home to a single industry that would change the size, structure, and status of the city within the coming decades. In the years roughly from 1880-1900, Chicago's labor force and employer powers not only experienced one of the largest economic and social growths in the history of the United States, but they also faced the greatest percentage of worker unrest than any other urban setting. During this twenty year span, an estimated 20,000 strikes took places across the United States. The strikes were growing in size and strength under the notion that a harm to one aspect of industry was potentially a danger to all workers. Raymond B. Gillette knew the potential dangers that employees placed on an industry that did nothing to fulfill its needs. In 1916, in the growing city of Eau Claire, with Gillette's creation of the Gillette Tire Safety Company, baseball, through industrial recreation, began its prominent and prosperous history in the state of Wisconsin.

## Raymond B. Gillette and Industrial Baseball in Eau Claire

Born in 1865 in New York, Raymond B. Gillette was a child of the aftermath of the Civil War and the era of Industrial Revolution. He spent his childhood living in New York and worked for a number of years as a farm hand during his teenage years. In the early 1890's Raymond attended Valparaiso University in Indiana before moving to Michigan to work for a

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of Minor Civil Divisions; 1910, 1900, and 1890- Continued" under "Population-Wisconsin," 1058. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1910.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of Minor Civil Divisions: 1910, 1900, and 1890- Continued" under "Population-Illinois," 445. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1910.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).

lumber company in East Lake Michigan and marrying wife Jessie, in 1898.<sup>17</sup> Gillette quickly became manager of the R.G. Peters Salt and Lumber Company and also served as the Mayor of Benton Harbor, MI for three terms. Raymond Gillette knew very well the positive impact of organized sport and activities for workers from his time spent working for the R.G. Peters Salt and Lumber Company in Michigan years earlier, where baseball was used as a community and company leisure activity for its employees.

Gillette made his way from Michigan to Little Rock, Arkansas for a short period of time before returning to Michigan to supervise lumber operations for Bogardus Land and Lumber Company. While working as manager of Bogardus Land and Lumber Company in 1909 and 1910, Raymond experienced first-hand the issues of labor unrest and the impact it can have on the existence of a company. The company was sold off to a prior lumber and business man from Chicago, Harold C. Johnson, who was still busy in the business of trade in Chicago and the Northern Midwest. Johnson's lack of attention to the operations of the Bogardus Land and Lumber Company, as well as his solid standpoint of ignorance toward the desires of his employees, led to severe unrest. Within one year of acquiring the company, Johnson handed the company over to another Michigan based lumber company, where many of the men, including Gillette lost their jobs to those previously employed with the new owners.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, Raymond's brother H.B. Gillette was working in Chicago, when he drew the interest of Raymond to his idea to create a safety inter-liner to prevent blowouts and punctures in auto tires. Although the idea attracted the interest of Raymond, it failed to draw in attract much business

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<sup>17</sup> 1910 United States Federal Census Record. National Archives and Records Administration. Raymond B. Gillette [http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/ixec?htx=View&r=5542&dbid=7884&iid=31111\\_4330143-00968&fn=Raymond+B&ln=Gillette&st=r&ssrc=&pid=12055362](http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/ixec?htx=View&r=5542&dbid=7884&iid=31111_4330143-00968&fn=Raymond+B&ln=Gillette&st=r&ssrc=&pid=12055362) (accessed February 21, 2013)

<sup>18</sup> *The Lumber World, Volume 11*. (Lumber World Publishing Company, 1911: University of Michigan) 34. (accessed March 3, 2013)

because of the wide variety of sizes of tires made at the time. Raymond decided that in order to successfully invest himself in the safety inter-liner, he must manufacture casings and inner tubes himself using this anti-blowout device.<sup>19</sup>

With some persuasion from Nicholas Whelan of the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light and Power Company, Gillette reported in late 1915 the Gillette Safety Tire Company would be built in Eau Claire, WI.<sup>20</sup> In the final months of 1915, Gillette hired contractors and citizens to



Figure 2. Presentation of the first tire at Gillette Tire Safety Co. on May 23, 1917.  
Source: UniRoyal Collection at UW- Eau Claire, Image ID: WHi- 29646

participate in the construction of the Gillette building. After construction, many of these hired hands were transitioned to work positions within the factory itself, beginning with 75 employees to produce 100 tires daily.<sup>21</sup> As construction continued into early 1916, Eau Claire was welcoming many other large industries that found the same appeal as Raymond

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<sup>19</sup> Chippewa Valley Museum, "Raymond B. Gillette." Chippewa Valley Museum in collaboration with L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, <http://www.chippedia.org/Gillette,+Raymond+B.> (accessed February 4, 2013)

<sup>20</sup> "New and Large Industry Secured For Eau Claire," *Eau Claire Leader*, November 23, 1915, 5. <http://eauclaire.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewer.aspx?img=100717046&currentResult=2&src=search.> (accessed February 4, 2013)

<sup>21</sup> "Foundation for Gillette Tire Co," *Eau Claire Leader*, December 7, 1915, 4. <http://eauclaire.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewer.aspx?img=95708405&firstvisit=true&src=search&currentResult=5&currentPage=0.> (accessed February 2, 2013)

Gillette.<sup>22</sup> Although the promise of new industries in Eau Claire held high hopes for the city, Gillette Tire Safety Company was the most eager to open their doors, and held true to each of their promises made to the city and the citizens within. After only 18 months of building and preparation, on May 17, 1917, Gillette Safety Tire Company proudly displayed their first tire in a display window of The Continental.<sup>23</sup> The Gillette Tire Safety Company worked on a pace of producing one hundred tires daily for their initial years of service, before gradually constructing additional buildings to accommodate the growth of the industry.

Growth of industry at the Gillette factory, along with the addition of other manufacturing companies in the Eau Claire area, caused the population to grow in accordance with the industry. While in 1920 the county of Eau Claire had a population of 35,771, by 1930 the population reached 41,087, and by 1940 the county of Eau Claire was home to 46,999.<sup>24</sup> While the industries and population of the area grew, so did the number of employees working at the Gillette Tire Safety Company. In 1934, with the passing of Raymond Gillette, the plant was producing 8,000 tires, 7,000 tubes, and 4,500 bike tires on a daily basis. It employed over 2,000 people and was Eau Claire's largest industry.<sup>25</sup> The industry had grown and prospered at such a rate that by 1931 with its contracts with General Motors Corporation, it became one of the

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<sup>22</sup> "Eau Claire is Now Styled City of Diversified Manufacturing," *Eau Claire Leader*, February 27, 1916, 3. <http://eauclaire.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewer.aspx?img=100715245&firstvisit=true&src=search&currentResult=2&currentPage=0> (accessed February 4, 2013)

<sup>23</sup> "Tire Process is Shown on Display," *Eau Claire Leader*, May 17, 1917, 8. <http://eauclaire.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewer.aspx?img=95753355&firstvisit=true&src=search&currentResult=0&currentPage=0>. (accessed February 4, 2013)

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of Minor Civil Divisions; 1920" under "Population-Wisconsin," 1058. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1920.html> (accessed February 2, 2013) also, "Population of Minor Civil Divisions; 1930," 1315. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1930.html> (accessed February 2, 2013) also, "Population of Minor Civil Divisions; 1940," <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.html> (accessed February 2, 2013)

<sup>25</sup> Chippewa Valley Museum, "Raymond B. Gillette." Chippewa Valley Museum in collaboration with L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, <http://www.chippepedia.org/Gillette,+Raymond+B.> (accessed February 4, 2013)

world's largest suppliers of original equipment tires, producing the Gillette brand as well as Ward, Atlas, and U.S. Rubber's brand, U.S. Royal. The same year that Raymond Gillette passed away, U.S. Rubber purchased a large amount of interest in Gillette Tire Safety Company and they took over all aspects of the company in 1940. The company was later renamed Uniroyal until its eventual closure in 1992. Raymond Gillette is still seen as a highly respected businessman in the Eau Claire area and is honored for his dedication to the community; creating one of Eau Claire's largest employers for more than 70 years.<sup>26</sup>

In the earliest years of the Gillette Tire Safety Company, Raymond B. Gillette feared the potential for employee unrest as he had seen at Bogardus Land and Lumber Company and insisted that employees would only maintain commitment and excellence in the workplace, if they were satisfied with the opportunities presented to them by their company. Before the completion of the first building of Gillette Tire and Safety Company, Raymond Gillette and his Secretary, Wilson, had created employee recreation programs as a way to relieve their workers from the stresses of working, but also to establish a strong connection between employees and employer. By 1917, the Gillette Tire Team competed in a baseball league made up of six total teams, with the teams competing with over thirty teams in the area.<sup>27</sup> With only 75 employees working for Gillette when their first production began, the baseball team was open to members of the community or those involved in other industries in Eau Claire.

As the Gillette Tire Safety Company grew hand-in-hand with the population of Eau Claire, so did the numbers of participants in industrial recreation baseball teams and leagues.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Gillette Tire Team Wins Two," *Eau Claire Leader*, February 1, 1917.  
<http://eauclaire.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewers.aspx?img=95765050&firstvisit=true&src=search&currentResult=2&currentPage=0> (accessed February 2, 2013)

Because of this growing interest and popularity of baseball in small urban towns, professional teams sought ways to profit off the interest in lower levels of the game. Although the professional leagues were experiencing new growth on the professional level with the emergence of star athletes such as Babe Ruth in New York, the working classes of baseball players and fans desired attention to the game that was made popular on their own terms. Although much of the country was in economic turmoil with the collapse of the stock market in 1929, Eau Claire and the Gillette Tire Safety Company continued to thrive, drawing interest from major investors all over the United States. As part of the New Deal community programs, in 1935 the industrial workers in accordance with the Eau Claire Bears (a "farm" team affiliated with the Chicago Cubs and later the Boston Braves) were the recipients of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) that would build a 130+ acre sports complex, including a baseball stadium.<sup>28</sup>

The project created jobs for unskilled laborers and by 1937, Carson Park Baseball Stadium was completed and ready to play host to its first minor league season for the Eau Claire Bears baseball team.<sup>29</sup> Although the industrial workers continued to participate in smaller size leagues than previously, there was less need for industrial recreation programs to satisfy laborers, since many were lucky to find employment in the first place. Although baseball lived on, historic events outside of the control of industry and community changed the way baseball would be viewed by the people of Wisconsin.

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<sup>28</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society, *Carson Park Baseball Stadium* under Wisconsin National Register of Historic Places, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/register/viewsummary.asp?refnum=03000698> (accessed February 7, 2013)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## World War II and the Shift From Player to Fan

Although American's initially doubted their major involvement in the war that began in 1939 in Europe, no one could have predicted the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. By 1942 all men ages 18-64 were required to register for the draft, although in reality the system focused on men under the age 38. Many of those entering the armed forces did so by volunteering, but the larger part, roughly ten million, were placed in the army through the draft.<sup>30</sup> Approximately 320,000 Wisconsin men and 9,000 women served in the armed forces during the war<sup>31</sup>, about 10% of Wisconsin's total population.<sup>32</sup> Not only did the war draw people away from their places of employment, it also shifted their attitudes away from the work they were doing and towards the purpose of their work. Many industries in the United States changed the focus of their production to produce items necessary for the war effort such as armor, supplies, weapons, and artillery; the last which was the case for the Gillette Tire Safety Company, at this time formally known as United Rubber.

The one positive impact the war had on the American economy is the direct connection between the end of the great depression and the entrance into the war. With industry working overtime and many employees away in battle, new jobs were created to help boost the economy more-so than any other time in the past decade. The effect this had on the workers was a positive one as well. Instead of worker resistance, unrest, and strikes for a better position in labor, workers enjoyed their position on factory lines and were given the strong sense of satisfaction

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<sup>30</sup> "Recruitment," *The National WWII Museum*. New Orleans, LA. Under *America Goes to War*. <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/america-goes-to-war.html> (accessed February 17, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> "World War II: What We Own." Wisconsin Historical Society. <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/military/ww2> (accessed February 3, 2013)

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Wisconsin Population

that their part in the war effort was fulfilled by the work they did.<sup>33</sup> This continued in the years following the war, lessening the importance of industrial recreation programs and shifting towards the importance of recreation in the nation as a whole.

During the battle years of the war, professional athletes and laborers alike stood on the front lines to defend our countries freedoms and with the new return to home in a time of (relative) peace, patriotism was altered. There was no longer a need for immigrants to be assimilated members of their community, for they had fought to protect America, and not their native lands. This was especially the case for German workers in Wisconsin, who made up nearly half of the population.<sup>34</sup> With this new sense of patriotism and nationalism, America was headed in a new direction, not only for the military and the economy, but for the world of baseball as well.

## Hank Aaron's Journey From Eau Claire to Milwaukee

The late 1940's and early 1950's showed a great deal of growth in minor league baseball programs and the attention they drew. Their affordable game tickets and smaller-town settings gave fans the feeling of a professional home-town team of their own. In 1947 there were only sixteen teams at the major league level, and cities such as Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis played home to two professional teams.<sup>35</sup> With the higher level teams so condensed in major cities, minor league baseball gave fans the competitive baseball

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Polenberg. *America at War: The Home Front, 1941-1945*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 42.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population by Race:1930- Continued" under "Population," 467. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1930.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> ESPN Major League Baseball. *Season History 1947*. [http://espn.go.com/mlb/history/season/\\_/year/1947](http://espn.go.com/mlb/history/season/_/year/1947) (accessed February 21, 2013)

they sought while keeping the teams in relatively small American towns. Eau Claire, WI was fortunate enough to be the host of a minor league baseball team from 1934-1942, and again from 1946-1953. The minor league organization switched affiliations numerous times, from the Boston Red Sox, to the Chicago Cubs, then to the Boston Braves who would eventually become the Milwaukee Braves.<sup>36</sup> In 1952, a young man from Mobile, Alabama would make his way up to Eau Claire, not only to shortly make it in the Major League, but after only one summer, to make Eau Claire and Wisconsin history forever.

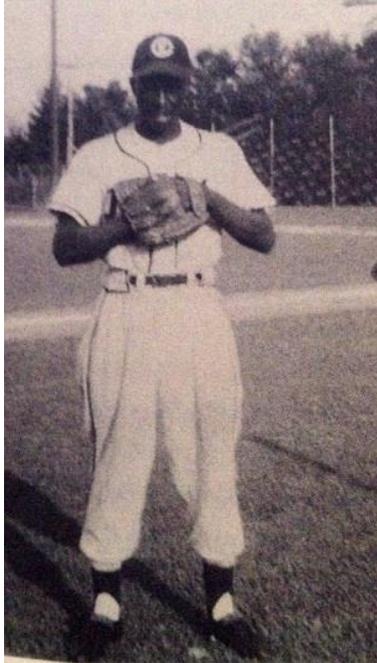
Born in 1934 in Mobile, Alabama, Henry "Hank" Aaron spent his youth playing pick-up baseball games with his brothers and father in an open neighborhood lot. His childhood, until the age of eighteen, was spent growing up only blocks away from many other rising stars that would one day make the major leagues, but without ever knowing, considering Mobile was separated and deeply segregated by a set of railroad tracks. When Hank was only thirteen years old, Jackie Robinson broke the baseball color barrier as the first African American man to play in a professional game when he took the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Hank was later quoted saying "Without Jackie Robinson, there wouldn't have been any Hank Aaron."<sup>37</sup>

In 1952, Hank was able to get out of Mobile, Alabama with the opportunity to play for one of the last Negro League teams left, the Indianapolis Clowns. Although the team was made of actual clowns, (including a midget, one player with an enormous glove, and an ambidextrous pitcher), Hank made no joke of the opportunity to play baseball. Shortly after his arrival with the Clowns, Aaron was purchased by the Boston Braves and sent to play for their Class C affiliate

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<sup>36</sup> Eau Claire Bears. *Baseball- Reference.com*. [http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Eau\\_Claire\\_Bears](http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Eau_Claire_Bears) (accessed February 2, 2013)

<sup>37</sup> Hank Aaron. *The Courage to Succeed*. Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire, 1982. Video recording.



**FIGURE 3.** 1952 Henry Aaron with the Eau Claire Bears (photo courtesy of Shirley Reitmeier)  
*Source:* A Summer Up North by Jerry Poling

farm team, the Eau Claire Bears. Hank spent the summer of 1952 living in the Eau Claire YMCA in downtown on Farwell Street with a number of his teammates. Unlike living in Mobile, Alabama, Hank was free to walk through town as he pleased, enter stores and restaurants, and go to any public facility without fear of refusal because of the color of his skin. In the 1950 Census Eau Claire was recorded as only having seven black citizens, three of which were players for the Eau Claire Bears.<sup>38</sup>

On Saturday, June 14, 1952, Hank Aaron suited up in his Eau Claire Bears uniform that was clearly a few sizes too big for his still, adolescent size frame. He started in the field at the short-stop position and batted seventh in the line-up. Aaron's first ever experience playing with or against white baseball players was frightening at first, but turned out to be rather welcoming to the 18-year-old Negro shortstop. Hank had two hits and an impressive showing in the field and was cheered on by the white spectators in Carson Park Stadium. The first week of Hank Aaron's presence in the Bears lineup, the team won five of seven games, and they were already gaining ground from their prior position in fifth place.<sup>39</sup> But Aaron's lasting presence in Eau Claire was not to be solely attributed to his statistics on the baseball field.

As Hank had concerns of his own about being a black player in this nearly all-white city, he was not the only one. In March of 1930, just weeks before the first African American players

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<sup>38</sup> Jerry Poling, *A Summer Up North: Henry Aaron and the Legend of Eau Claire Baseball*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) 7, 9, 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 26-27.

were introduced on the Eau Claire Bears minor league team, an article was published in the *Leader* that the local Toastmasters club had voted against black ballplayers in Eau Claire.<sup>40</sup> With an uproar of reactions, most in dispute of the vote, Eau Claire pressed forward and within the following month the Bears had signed their first players of color. Billy Burton, one of the African American boys who played for the Eau Claire Bears in 1950 recalls the experience as a positive one, enjoying the time he spent playing there. He also commented that ninety-nine percent of the people in Eau Claire welcomed the boys with open arms, and that if he played to his full potential at every chance, he could turn the outlying one percent onto his side.<sup>41</sup>

Even though Hank had a few black players precede him, his personality and his view of the situation did not make the transition easy on him. Because of his sensitive character, there were numerous times where Hank felt utterly alone and discouraged, on the verge of quitting the game and returning to Mobile, AL. Through the troubles he faced, Hank made few friends, often with rival team players. From the mouths and opinions of his friends, Hank truly realized the opportunity that he had been presented with and stuck with the game with the hopes of stardom. While fighting through personal issues, Hank's performance on the field made him the talk of the town. He was leading the Northern League in batting average, helped the team to ten straight wins in late June, and brought the bears within six and a half games of first place.<sup>42</sup> Hank began to adjust to the changes of lifestyle and the welcoming home he found in Eau Claire with the Bears organization.

The shift in Eau Claire baseball did not simply leave the workers and prior competitors of U.S. Rubber in the dust though. Lew Coyer, a typical thirty-seven year old factory worker who

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 44.

had spent several seasons competing with the Gillette Bears, had great admiration for the new and growing minor league game. He worked the evening shift with U.S. Rubber and was only able to attend Sunday evening games, but he often dropped his son off at the ballpark to watch the 1952 Eau Claire Bears. When Lew would pick his son up after the game, he often gave Hank and other Bears players a ride back to the YMCA downtown.<sup>43</sup> The shift in baseball's culture in Eau Claire was not merely one of sport and entertainment, but a shift in the culture of the northern cities. Although the population of Eau Claire would remain dominantly white for years to come, the presence of Hank Aaron in Eau Claire allowed the citizens to adjust to the new lifestyle of integrated societies and sport. Aaron recalled his friendships and time spent with the Bears, stating "playing in Eau Claire gave me a chance to look at things with a much broader, wider scope. I learned you have to judge people individually rather than collectively. I was treated as fair as could be."<sup>44</sup>

While some teams across the United States were still facing serious problems with racism and segregation not only within the community but within the city, Eau Claire was flourishing. With the success of the Eau Claire Bears and their numerous growing industries, including U.S. Rubber/UniRoyal, the town was seen as a leading image of the country's integration efforts in the town and in the sporting world. After the summer of 1952, Aaron went on to play for the Milwaukee Braves, the recently relocated Boston Braves who were the major league to the Eau Claire Bears. Hank traveled highway 94 from Eau Claire to Milwaukee, where he played with the Braves from 1954 until 1965. Shortly after Aaron left Eau Claire and the Bears organization, minor league baseball began its slump. With the inclusion of televisions in nearly

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>44</sup>Hank Aaron. *The Courage to Succeed*. Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire, 1982. Video recording. as quoted in *A Summer Up North* by Jerry Poling, 53.

every household, fans were able to watch Major League Baseball without leaving their living rooms. Fortunately, the baseball fans of Wisconsin still had this opportunity to watch the professional baseball, and Aaron's career in Milwaukee.<sup>45</sup>

When the team transferred their organization once again in 1965, this time to Atlanta, Hank stuck with them. On April 8, 1974, Hank Aaron broke what some saw as a truly permanent Major League Baseball record, the most career home-runs. This record was held by whom some thought was one of the greatest players of all time, Babe Ruth.<sup>46</sup> In Hank Aaron's Hall Of Fame major league career, he had 755 home runs, a .305 batting average, while playing in just shy of 3,300 games. He was voted to the Major League All Star game in all of his seasons except his first and his last.<sup>47</sup>

Regardless of the success had by Hank Aaron either in Milwaukee or Atlanta, he never forgot Wisconsin or that first summer of '52 in Eau Claire when it all began. In 1975, after Hank had broke Babe Ruth's homerun record, he returned to the Milwaukee Brewers to finish his professional career where he had started. Today, Hank Aaron continues to be an honored and respected member of the baseball world, and the recognition of Eau Claire's role in his illustrious career is shared by Aaron and the citizens of Eau Claire alike. Those who grew up in Eau Claire playing for the factory teams or even simply backyard baseball had a new and proud reason to support not only their minor league community teams, but the impact of this small city on the nation's game of baseball. Regardless of the mark left by Aaron, Milwaukee also struggled with

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<sup>45</sup> Jerry Poling. *A Summer Up North: Henry Aaron and the Legend of Eau Claire Baseball*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) 90-91.

<sup>46</sup> Ron Fimrite. "End of the Glorious Ordeal," *Sports Illustrated*. (April, 15, 1974). [http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/baseball/mlb/features/1999/aaron/aaron\\_story/](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/baseball/mlb/features/1999/aaron/aaron_story/) (accessed March 1, 2013)

<sup>47</sup> "Hank Aaron Career Stats" *Major League Baseball*, MLB.com. [http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player\\_id=110001#gameType='R'&sectionType=career&statType=1&season=2013&level='ALL'](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=110001#gameType='R'&sectionType=career&statType=1&season=2013&level='ALL') (accessed March 1, 2013)

the sport, but luckily, similar to the city of Eau Claire, it had another hero waiting to change the face of baseball for the state of Wisconsin and the sport on a national level.

## Allen "Bud" Selig and the Milwaukee Brewers

*"Bud Selig is my hero; He has taken baseball to a better place than where he found it"*

-Hank Aaron, *Ceremony for Selig Statue*<sup>48</sup>

In 1965, the Milwaukee Braves were relocated to Atlanta because of falling attendance at games and the beliefs that Milwaukee was not on the national level of other cities who were home to Major League teams. However, there were many Milwaukee citizens that were not pleased with the removal of their professional baseball team. Fortunately for the city and the state of Wisconsin, there was a man who went above and beyond to bring major league baseball back to his home state. Since the end of World War II and other military events in the world, baseball had shifted in importance as a part of being American, and the sport was seen as a symbol of patriotism. Even the earlier days of baseball in factory teams such as Gillette, baseball was seen as a game that exemplified everything that was right and moral in American culture.<sup>49</sup>

Within months of the birth of Hank Aaron and the passing of Raymond Gillette, Allan H. Selig was born in July of 1934 in Milwaukee. "Bud" as he came to be known, followed the old Milwaukee Brewers minor league team and the Chicago Cubs in his childhood. Selig played baseball during his childhood but once advancing to the high-school level of the sport, he had

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Barzilai. "Bud Selig Attends Ceremony For Bud Selig Statue." *USA Today*. published August 24, 2010. <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/dailypitch/post/2010/08/bud-selig-attends-ceremony-for-bud-selig-statue/1#.UVHH8hzvuSo> (accessed March 4, 2013)

<sup>49</sup> Steven Riess. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT. 1980),

difficulty hitting a curveball and traded in his glove and cleats for a more fan-obsessed approach to the game.<sup>50</sup> In 1952, Allen Selig moved to Madison to complete his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Through his college years and beyond Selig became a huge fan and eventually a dear friend to Hank Aaron. Selig was even the teams largest public stockholder until he sold his stock before the team relocated in 1965. After graduation he returned to Milwaukee to join his father in the business of selling cars, as well as a return to a city thriving with baseball. When word spread that the Braves would be transferring from Milwaukee to Atlanta, Selig founded "Teams, Inc.," an organization focused on finding a replacement team to take the place of the Braves in Milwaukee. In 1968 and 1969, efforts to purchase and move the Chicago White Sox to Milwaukee failed due to the rising popularity of the cross-town rivalry growing between the Chicago White Sox and Chicago Cubs.<sup>51</sup> This was only one of the many obstacles that stood in Selig's way when attempting to obtain a new major league team for Milwaukee.

After being denied from the White Sox, Selig set his sights on a failing professional Seattle team called the Pilots. The organization was facing hard times in Seattle and Selig believed Teams, Inc. had the solution to the problem, buy the team and bring them back to his city of Milwaukee. Selig made a hefty offer for the team (\$10.8 million) and the team agreed to make the sale. Unfortunately, the arrangement was dependent upon the Major Baseball League approving the move and it failed to pass the appropriate measures. Major League Executives wanted to keep the team in Seattle and offered up the leagues money to try and save the

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<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Thompson. "Bud Selig: A Baseball Hero. Really." Slate.com, (May 5, 2005). [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/assessment/2005/05/bud\\_selig.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/assessment/2005/05/bud_selig.html) (accessed March 3, 2013)

<sup>51</sup> Allan H. (Bud) Selig. *MLB Official Info: MLB Executives*. [http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official\\_info/about\\_mlb/executives.jsp?bio=selig\\_bud](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/about_mlb/executives.jsp?bio=selig_bud) (accessed February 7, 2013)

organization.<sup>52</sup> Milwaukee was left with little hope of the return of major league baseball to their beloved city. Selig was not so easily put down by the offer and continued connections with the doomed Seattle Pilots.

Soon enough even attempts by Major League Baseball failed to save the Seattle Pilot organization and the team made the executive decision to file for bankruptcy. Selig again proposed his offer to purchase the organization under the grounds that he would be relocating the team to Milwaukee. But yet again, the executives of the MLB voted against the presence of a team in Milwaukee. Selig began to feel a personal vendetta against his hometown and took the

situation to courts in Seattle and with little deliberation, a decision was made. The bankruptcy court ordered the sale of the Seattle Pilots to Selig and Teams, Inc. on April 1, 1970, for \$10.8 million. The Milwaukee Brewers played their first game six days later at Milwaukee County Stadium.<sup>53</sup> For the first time since the

relocation of the Milwaukee Braves, Wisconsin fans had a professional team to once again call their own.



**Figure 4.** Rollie Fingers (left), Bud Selig (middle), Hank Aaron (right) at Miller Park ceremony, 2010  
*Source:* Peter Barzilai, "Bud Selig Attends Ceremony For Bud Selig Statue", USA Today

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<sup>52</sup> Allan H. Selig v. United States of America, United States Court of Appeals. 740 F.2d 572 (July 27, 1984), Section 11, LexisNexis (accessed February 17, 2013)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, Section 13.

Allen Bud Selig became president of the Milwaukee Brewers club, taking the team into the postseason in 1981, and to the World Series in 1982. Selig and other Brewers executives are in part responsible for the success careers of stars such as Paul Molitor, Rollie Fingers, and Robin Yount, athletes who are still today recognized by the Brewers organization by the retiring of their jersey numbers. Under Selig's watch, the Milwaukee Brewers won seven Organization of the Year awards, Topps "Organization of the Year" in 1987, '89, '91, '92, and an unprecedented three-straight Baseball America awards from 1985-87.<sup>54</sup> Selig served as president of the Brewers organization from their purchase in 1970 until 1992 when his role in baseball would shift from the Wisconsin level to a National position. In 1992, Fay Vincent, commissioner of Major League Baseball resigned from his position and with an 18-9 no-confidence vote, Selig who was currently serving as Executive Council of Major League Baseball, became de facto acting commissioner. Upon assuming the role of acting commissioner, Selig's daughter, Wendy Selig-Prieb, took over as acting president of the club to remove any technical conflicts of interest, but Allen placed his interest in the team in a trust, maintaining some minimal hand in the team operations.<sup>55</sup>

Bud Selig remained as acting commissioner of baseball through arguably the most difficult year of Major League Baseball history, the strike of 1994-95. Due to labor disputes, a 232-day strike ensued from August 11, 1994 until April 25, 1995, causing the cancellation of the 1994 postseason and World Series, and over 900 major league games. The strike cost players

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<sup>54</sup> Allan H. (Bud) Selig. *MLB Official Info: MLB Executives*. [http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official\\_info/about\\_mlb/executives.jsp?bio=selig\\_bud](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/about_mlb/executives.jsp?bio=selig_bud) (accessed February 7, 2013)

<sup>55</sup> Michael Aubrecht. *Bud Selig Biography: The Commissioner Who Just Can't Win*. Baseball Almanac, 2002. [http://www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/bud\\_selig\\_biography.shtml](http://www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/bud_selig_biography.shtml)

millions of dollars and management about \$1 billion.<sup>56</sup> The main reasons behind this strike had little to do with any action on the part of Selig. The disagreements between players and owners came from the inability to agree on a system of paying players' salaries; the owners demanded a salary cap while the players opposed any form of system that would restrict salaries.<sup>57</sup> While the sporting world was enraged at the first cancellation of the World Series in 90 years, Selig was faced with a majority of the scrutiny from baseball's fans, owners, and players. Regardless of the difficulty Selig faced during the strike, he remained confident in his actions and worked through the adversity of one of baseball's most trying events.

Six years after he became "interim commissioner" of Major League Baseball, he was officially named the ninth commissioner in July of 1998. Contributions that Bud Selig has made to the game were mainly in the implementation of new rules and regulations, including the institution of additional playoff rounds. Among these changes and additions were the establishment of Interleague Play, allowing American and National league teams to compete against each other for the first time in MLB history. He also introduced the Wild Card system which provided opportunities for more teams to compete in the post season and the importance of the All-Star Game, making it the deciding factor for home-field advantage in the World Series. These changes implied by Selig by the earlier years of his tenure as commissioner were all prior to the 2003 season, and although some of the fans enjoyed his rule changes and league additions, there were still some who did not find Selig and his actions as positive extensions of

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<sup>56</sup> Associated Press. *1994 Strike Was A Low Point For Baseball*. (August 10, 2004). <http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?id=1856626> (accessed March 3, 2013)

<sup>57</sup> Murray Chass. "BASEBALL; Baseball Is Heading For Final Inning of '94". *New York Times*, (September 12, 1994). <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/12/sports/baseball-baseball-is-heading-for-final-inning-of-94.html> (accessed February 3, 2013).

the game.<sup>58</sup> Another threat that Selig continues to face by the modern game of professional baseball is the growing divisions between the rich and poor teams. As the one time owner of a small market team, few could understand the difficulties faced by the "poor" market teams of the league against financially superior teams such as the New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Texas Rangers, Los Angeles Angels, etc. This dichotomy was only deepened in 2000 when the Texas Rangers signed Alex Rodriguez to a \$252 million contract, the largest contract ever given to a professional athlete until this time.<sup>59</sup> This continues to be an issue today while the difference between the team with the highest payroll and the lowest payroll shows a massive gap of over \$143 million.<sup>60</sup> But regardless of the steep pay differences between organizations, Selig continues to operate as commissioner with the interests of all financial level teams in mind.

In 2005, Selig made possibly his most memorable change to the game and growing industry of professional baseball. In April of 2005, Bud Selig sent a letter to Donald Fehr, the executive director of the players union, outlining the new strict policies to be adopted to their drug-testing agreement. Baseball has been seen as a game of American symbolism, and violations of drug policies do not only harm the game itself, but also the industry, the teams, the owners, the fans, and everyone involved or connected to that athlete. The drug policy prior to Selig's letter proposed only a 10-game suspension to first time offenders, 30 games for a second time offender, and 60 games for a third time offender. Selig's newly proposed plan made the first offense punishable by a 50-game suspension, second offense by 100 games, and a "three

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Aubrecht. *Bud Selig Biography: The Commissioner Who Just Can't Win*. Baseball Almanac, 2002. [http://www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/bud\\_selig\\_biography.shtml](http://www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/bud_selig_biography.shtml) (accessed February 7, 2013)

<sup>59</sup> George Vecsey. "Sports of the Times; A-Rod Chose Big Bucks, Small Setting". *New York Times*. (December 13, 2000). <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/13/sports/sports-of-the-times-a-rod-chose-big-bucks-small-setting.html> (accessed February 7, 2013)

<sup>60</sup> MLB Salaries: 2012 Team Payrolls. *CBS Sports*. <http://www.cbssports.com/mlb/salaries> (accessed February 3, 2013)

strikes and you are out" plan, stating in his letter that steroid users cheat the game, and after three offenses, they have no place in it. Along with the change in suspension for steroid users, Selig's policy included banning specific levels of amphetamines to the list of performance-enhancing substances.<sup>61</sup> Although many players felt these punishments were too harsh, many fans and sponsors believed harsher punishments were necessary to keep the morals of the game at the levels that were expected.

In 2006, Selig's drug policy went into effect and following the completion of the postseason, Bud announced he would retire as commissioner upon the expiration of his contract in 2009. However, as the time closed in on the end of his term, Selig signed a three year contract extension, and announced he would retire when that contract was up after the 2012 season. Yet once again, Selig couldn't pull himself away from the game and signed another contract extension keeping his as the commissioner of baseball until the 2014 season.<sup>62</sup> If Bud Selig chooses to retire when this last contract extension is up he will be 80 years old at the time of his retirement. Spending his childhood and the first 55-plus years of his life supporting the state of Wisconsin and the baseball that he is responsible for bringing here. Selig's impact will forever be remembered by Wisconsin as the man that brought the Brewers and professional baseball back to their beloved city and state.

Today, alongside the Green Bay Packers, the Milwaukee Brewers are the pride of the Wisconsin sports world. The Brewers attract over 2.5 million fans each season, nearly half of those fans travelling from outside the five-county Milwaukee area. The direct and indirect

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<sup>61</sup> Jack Curry, Murray Chass, and Ray Glier. "Selig Seeks Harder Line On Drugs In Baseball". *New York Times*. (May 1, 2005). <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/01/sports/baseball/01steroids.html> (accessed February 3, 2013)

<sup>62</sup> Allan "Bud" Selig. *Wikipedia*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bud\\_Selig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bud_Selig) (accessed February 17, 2013)

spending by visitors and the Brewers on operations brings in around \$356 million a year. In the aftermath of the worst economic recession, ballparks have brought in large amounts of money into cities and state economies, not to mention drastically helped the employment situations. In the past decade, the economic impact of the Milwaukee Brewers and their new stadium, Miller Park, has brought over \$3 billion, added employment, and additional sales tax, income tax, and other growth as well.<sup>63</sup> Without the efforts of Allen Bud Selig in 1969 and 1970, and his love for the game of baseball in accordance with his home, not only would Wisconsin lack a professional baseball team, but all of the positive benefits that have come from the Milwaukee Brewers organization and Allen Selig's tenure as commissioner of Major League Baseball.

## Conclusion

For many cities and states who play host to Major League Baseball teams, their road was paved when their populations grew large enough from immigrant laborers and industry. Places such as New York, Chicago, and Boston, claims to fame in baseball saw little bumps along the road. Although many industries similar to Gillette created baseball teams for their employees, this was the least popular form of baseball for those larger cities such as Chicago, where professional baseball was being played as early as 1890. Although Wisconsin may have been slightly behind on the emergence of baseball, its unique story and journey across the state following the stories of very important men make it one that cannot be erased or forgotten. Raymond Gillette not only put Eau Claire, WI on the map by creating one of the largest

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<sup>63</sup> Don Behm. "Distant Brewers Fans Have \$263 Million Annual Economic Impact, Study Says". *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. (March 12, 2013). From Southeast Wisconsin Professional Baseball Park District published in searches completed by Swarnjit S. Arora with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Institute for Survey and Policy Research, commissioned by Major League Baseball. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/new-study-distant-brewers-fans-have-263-million-annual-economic-impact-vm94jgd-197535861.html> (accessed March 20, 2013)

industries in the area and throughout the state, but his recreation programs for his employees fostered the growing interest in America's National pastime.

Today, children become involved in sport, baseball in particular, at a very young age. The reason for this is the same reason industrial, immigrant laborers enjoyed the game 100 years ago. The sport promotes values and ideals that we hold dear to American culture, the team environment allows teammates to become sportsman and competitors, while making friends and following structure. Although Jackie Robinson came before, Hank Aaron broke the color barrier for Wisconsin in his summer playing baseball for the Eau Claire Bears, and later went on to break one of the greatest records held in professional baseball. Aaron set an example for the players of color to come by showing that in the face of adversity, baseball and skill will prevail. It is not the color of a man's skin that should be recognized, but by his abilities as a person. Even though this change in American society began with legislation, its incorporation in society was truly aided by the game of baseball.

Wisconsin's final turn in its triple play, and one which the legacy will remain part of the game forever lie in the actions of Bud Selig and his triumphant need to bring baseball back to his beloved state. Wisconsin is indebted to Selig for bringing the Brewers within our borders, but our debt is minor compared to that of the nations baseball fans. The evolution of the game in the past 15-20 years has been extreme, from the extreme jump in player salary to the extensive list of performance-enhancing supplements available to athletes, Selig has faced Major League Baseball and its millions of fans with a positive outlook and a firm hand. Selig's changes to the game such as the Wild Card and Interleague Play make the game a more enjoyable one, not only for the fans but for the players and owners as well. His stance on baseball's drug policy has kept the game a respectable one, and although some players continue to break the rules and

guidelines, it is not the policy that is seen as wrong, it is the player who violates such a sacred and honest man's game.

As fans of the sport, it is common for people to praise the athlete whose autograph is worth hundreds, or thousands of dollars because of a contract that would pay for housing for entire counties of people. But the credit for the evolution of the game is not to be placed on these players or their contracts, but the names like Selig or Gillette, who truly made things happen for the sport. The triple play that rarely shines on the field, is set dull-ly aside to tamper off, and although these three men are not the star of everyone's favorite team, their historic play cannot be overlooked. Wisconsin's roots in baseball are unique and for the most part, unknown by the rest of the country, yet our history is what has created their present in the sport of baseball.



**Figure 5.** Evolution of Milwaukee Baseball Logos 1953-1966, 1970-Present. [www.sportslogos.net](http://www.sportslogos.net)

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