

Everybody Gets into the Act: Baseball in the 1890s

When the baseball organization in Mitchell organized in May of 1890, they made an appeal to “all lovers of the game” for \$37.00 to cover the balance due from the previous season (\$14.75), supplies thus far: (\$7.25), work on grounds (\$10.50), and lumber for back-stop (\$4.50). They announced that two first class nines (and a third if enough members joined) would be formed. This indicated that they wanted to allow full participation to all members, but also that the best players in town should be concentrated on the “first nine.” Even so, the first nine experienced an embarrassing 20-7 defeat at Parker on July 4 that the hometown *Mitchell Capital* said, “...was the rockiest exhibition of ball playing of which a Mitchell team was ever guilty.” The *Capital* didn’t hold back on their criticism of the team adding, “Our fellows couldn’t hit the ball when it was needed; they couldn’t get their hands on it in the field; and when they threw it seventeen ways from Sunday.”¹ Things didn’t improve for the squad as they dropped two one-sided games at Madison 16-5 and 22-8 in mid-August.

After their successful 1889 campaign, Aberdeen didn’t even field a team in 1890. In fact, before the season the local paper wrote, “...there are many who assisted in last year’s enterprise who will not feel like doing anything for the coming season except to attend the games and guy the umpire.”² So, other clubs made claims as being the best baseball team in the new state of South Dakota.³ Madison made a commitment to fielding a strong nine by signing up Bud Jones, a resident of nearby Flandreau and a member of last’s year’s Aberdeen squad, to catch. The club sported new gray uniforms with wine-colored belts and stockings and the inscription; “Madison; Pierre for Capital” inscribed across the breast. The paper explained, “Pierre for Capital” is recognized as a mascot, and when properly interpreted means “Sure to Win”. By early August, “The reputation of the Madisons has gone abroad, and they are in daily receipt of invitations to visit surrounding towns.”⁴

The club planned a three-city tour in mid-August with stops in Sioux Falls, Parker, and Mitchell and added Harry Howe, a teammate of Jones’ with Aberdeen last year, to reinforce their pitching staff. The scores differ between the Sioux Falls and Mitchell papers, but Mitchell swept all three games at Riverside Park in Sioux Falls. Madison scored nine runs in the eighth inning of a lopsided 22-6 win in one of the games, prompting accusation of unnecessarily “piling it on” and a Sioux Falls fan saying that the, “The Madison boys are a brutal lot of fellows.”⁵ Madison swept Parker and Mitchell as well, winning all seven games on the trip, and upon their return home the local paper called them, “...the champion baseball players of the state of South Dakota.” The team was met at the train depot by citizens and businessmen and were led by the town band on a procession “embellished with banners and transparencies, handsome, sarcastic, and ludicrous” to a banquet in their honor at the opera house.

Madison and Sioux Falls agreed to meet again September 9, 10, and 11 in Madison. The first game was a tight, well-played 1-1 tie through the fourth inning with betting confined to “points

and individual plays” because the sporting men were “unwilling to place bets on the final outcome of the game.” Howe struck out sixteen Sioux Falls batters and Madison pulled away late to take an 11-5 win. The crowd, “one of the largest that has even been assembled at the park” was described as “very decorous” and the game story added, “...while there was considerable betting going on and there was a noticeable absence of boisterousness, due, perhaps, to the fact that there were quite a large number of ladies present.”⁶ The second game was a back and forth affair, finally won by Madison 15-13 and they completed the sweep, and their sixth consecutive win over Sioux Falls, with a 12-7 win on the final day. The town’s undertaker made a drawing in the shape of a tombstone, reprinted in the newspaper, intended as a memorial to the vanquished Sioux Falls club.⁷

Maybe still stung by the decisive defeats by Madison the previous season, Sioux Falls didn’t play much baseball early in the 1891 season. Things reached a low point when they dropped two games to the small town of LeMars, Iowa, the second an 11-0 shutout by Howe, the same pitcher who had beaten them while with Madison last year, and who was now engaged by LeMars. However, in early August, manager George Burnside arranged a series of games with a club from St. Cloud, said to be the top amateur team in Minnesota. Sioux Falls added a pitcher named Preston from Woodward, Iowa and St. Cloud added William Gibbs who had pitched for Grand Forks, North Dakota earlier in the season, and when the St. Cloud team and their backers arrived at the Commercial House in Sioux Falls the confident group made it known that they were offering five to one odds on their team for any amount up to \$1,000.⁸

The opener was on Thursday August 20, and with the “grandstand filled and scores of other spectators occupying positions outside” Burnside Park, it looked as if their bets were safe after St. Cloud took a 6-0 lead after two innings and stretched the margin to 8-1 by the fourth and “everybody had given up hope”. However, Sioux Falls battled back with four runs in the sixth inning, another in the seventh, and four more in the eighth inning to take a 12-10 win. It wasn’t reported how much St. Cloud fans lost, only that, “a considerable amount of money was dropped”.⁹ St. Cloud turned the tables the next day as Gibbs struck out sixteen in a 22-6 win over Sioux Falls.

It wasn’t clear why the two teams did not play on Saturday, but the third game of the series was planned for Sunday and, “a vigorous protest went up from many citizens who expressed themselves as surprised at the action of the [baseball] association and insist that the game not take place”. This was because Sunday baseball was against the law in South Dakota and anyone in violation, players as well as any spectators in attendance, were subject to arrest and a \$1 fine. The *Argus-Leader* editorialized, “Sioux Falls is a law-abiding community. There is no occasion for Sunday playing. Six days are quite sufficient for the sport. Sunday has been set aside by the sober thought of the people as a day of rest. The vast majority of the citizens of Sioux Falls support the justice and wisdom of this measure. They do not wish to see it broken or overridden.” They closed their comments with a threat stating, “Should such action be taken, there would be a vigorous and very proper indignation which would result in an unpleasant experience for the ball players.”¹⁰ Burnside, it was reported, “was surprised at the opposition to the game, but having made all arrangements, would not agree to call it off.”

He must have yielded to the pressure as the game was not played. St. Cloud stayed over and the clubs agreed to play again Monday and the forced open dates allowed Sioux Falls to add reinforcements. Burnside added a pitcher named Packard from Iowa and telegraphed LeMars for Howe and Keefe, where the pair had been playing this summer. A strong wind, and an increase in the admission price - from twenty-five to fifty cents - cut down on the crowd, but those that did attend the Monday game saw a pitching duel between Gibbs and Howe. Both men struck out nine, and Howe surrendered only three hits, but Gibbs allowed just two hits to Sioux Falls batters as St. Cloud took the game 3-1.

A few days later it was reported that Burnside had released the paid players and the club disbanded for the year. He said, "I am through. I have spent a considerable sum of my own money, only to be roasted by the public and players, and I have decided to quit." Apparently, Burnside had some financial interest in the ball park as well because he added, "I will not lease the grounds for any money, but if anybody wants to buy the fence and grandstand outright, I am willing to sell."¹¹ Local businessmen quickly put together a new organization with the players left in town. A new manager, W. G. McKennan, was named and a committee was formed to canvas the city resulting in \$200 of the goal of \$250 as a guarantee (to be paid in case of a deficit at the end of the season). They went about contacting teams about games with the goal of securing an attractive opponent for state fair week at the end of September.

Apparently, Burnside had cooled off because a couple of weeks later he was back managing the club and began adding players. First baseman Tom Morrissey and pitcher Bob Black, a former major leaguer who had earlier played for the Hot Springs club in the Black Hills, were brought in from the Sioux City Western League club. Shortstop A.V. Greene was expected and Howe and Keefe, "it is understood, can be obtained during the latter part of the month at any rate." In mid-September Burnside announced that for \$500 – part from the guarantees collected and part from anticipated ticket sales - the St. Cloud come would agree to come back for a series of games. They loaded up for the series as well, Sioux Falls saying that their opponents, "...gathered up the greater portion of the Minneapolis league team."¹²

Wind and the fifty-cent ticket process cut into attendance again in the first game on Tuesday morning, September 22. But despite, or maybe because of, the wind, Howe's curve was working and he held St. Cloud scoreless until the seventh inning, striking out eleven and surrendered just two hits in a 9-4 Sioux Falls win. The next morning, despite St. Cloud having rushed in a new battery from Oskaloosa, Iowa, Howe chipped in with two home runs (over the fence) and Keefe hit another round tripper as Sioux Falls made it two straight with an 8-3 win. The game story noted, "Bets on St. Cloud went begging at the start of the game this morning. The local sports were a trifle leery for fear of a throw-down, as such a rumor prevailed this morning." Nonetheless, "Quite a bunch of money changed hands..."¹³

The third game, which turned out to be the last game of the season for the Sioux Falls club, ended on a sour note. Maybe there was something to the rumors of the throw-down because after

St. Cloud scored nine first-inning runs it was revealed that, “Several of the players had been drinking and only a few made an effort to play ball.” Both teams played equally bad and after “three innings of horseplay...they [the crowd] got mad, the players got mad, and all left the grounds.” The *Argus-Leader* went on the report, “The crowd was very angry as it left the grounds and a number demanded the return of the money. One man drew a knife and threatened to make manger Burnside deliver up his fifty cents. He was accommodated.” In what was somewhat of an understatement, the event was summed up by saying, “The affair was certainly a rank swindle.”¹⁴

The Parker Tour

Farmers in eastern South Dakota harvested an unusually bountiful crop in 1891, boasting of wheat “as large as popcorn kernels” that yielded 30 bushels to the acre and corn “much higher than a man’s head.”¹⁵ Something called the “Bureau of Information”, an organization of business and real estate men in the small Turner County town of Parker hatched a scheme. In early August they arranged for a number of special cars on the Chicago and Northwestern railroad, “...equipped, properly decorated with banners and badges,” that would make a three-week tour east, originally planning to go as far as Ohio. The purpose of the excursion was show off their bounty to the rest of the country and “the train will be loaded with exhibits of grain, stock, fruit, etc., and thousands of advertising circulars will be distributed setting forth the advantages of Turner County...” The entourage included the Parker Cornet Band, and about 50 citizens among them speakers to “extoll the merits of their respective cities and talk upon the advantages of locating in Turner County. It was promised the exhibits, “...are such as will make easterners stare with amazement”¹⁶ and once they got underway, “at every place where the car stops crowds flock to view the exhibit...and everywhere the most unbounded astonishment is expressed...”¹⁷

The Parker ball team, which according to the local paper had, “cleaned out everything they have tackled this year”¹⁸ and was, “unquestionably the best baseball club in the state”¹⁹ It wasn’t unusual for teams from eastern South Dakota to take lengthy road trips into Iowa and Minnesota, so the town’s ball team was invited to go along and play games against local opponents at each stop. At one point it was even hoped they could arrange a game against the White Stocking of Chicago while in Illinois. Things got off to a rough start for the ball club, getting thrashed at their first stop in LeMars, Iowa by one-sided scores of 18-4 and 16-0. The local paper implied that LeMars, and possibly other opponents on the trip, “loaded up” with outside professionals and explained, “Our boys are not professional ball players and do not pretend to be, but they can and do beat any amateur team in the country.”²⁰ The team won 5-4 at their next stop in Dennison, Iowa and then entered a six-day tournament at Maquoketa, Iowa where they won four of six games.²¹ No other results were reported but later in the month it was reported the team won 8 of 14 games on tour²² No other games outside of their Iowa opponents were reported and it wasn’t stated how far east the group got. In fact, the local weekly, the *Parker New Era*, didn’t even comment when

the train and ball team reached home, as the news of the county fair, and an ad promoting the arrival of a traveling circus took up most of the space in the four-page paper.

Parker fielded competitive teams over the next few years and embarked on another lengthy eastern trip in August 1895. This tour, like the one in 1891, started out on the wrong foot when the team arrived in Sioux City for their first game short three players. Substitutes were borrowed from their opponents but Parker was beaten twice, 14-5 and 14-6. Reinforcements brought in but they lost the next game 24-9 at Onawa, Iowa. They righted the ship with two wins at Perry but lost at Davenport 21-11, before winning at Maquoketa 16-14. Moving on to Minnesota they lost games at Winona, Waseca, and Mankato but when they returned home the *Turner County Herald* reported that they lost just 7 of 23 games played.

With no formal structure in place, top players could jump from town to town, sometimes on a weekly basis, so the balance of power could quickly shift from one community to another depending on which town could secure the most coveted pitchers and catchers. Things were wide open in eastern South Dakota early in 1892 when one of the top duos began the season playing out of state. Early in May it was reported that catcher Tim Keefe was with the Lincoln, Nebraska club and that pitcher Harry Howe was in LeMars, Iowa, “waiting for something to turn up.”²³ Keefe remained in Iowa but something did turn up for Howe as he was secured by Madison in July where he was reunited catcher Bud Jones. The little town of Howard filled the void early in the season when they secured pitcher Eugene Kennedy and catcher Owen McCarrier and they and Madison squared off in a series of games.

The opening game, on July 1 at the Madison Driving Park, resulted in an 11-11 tie after Howard refused to play any longer after twelve innings. It wasn't stated why, but the two teams didn't resume their series until three weeks later when Madison took two games from Howard by scores of 4-2 and 8-3. The second game remained scoreless through seven innings when Howard scored three in the eighth but Madison came back with five in their half of the inning and tacked on three more in the ninth. The way the game unfolded raised some questions as to whether the game was sold by Howard. Nothing was conclusively proven, but a reprint in the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* from the *Howard Democrat* stated: “Being an eyewitness we are not to blame if we can't see as others, but we are satisfied in our own mind that both games were given to Madison by players in the Howard nine.”²⁴

Extra coaches were attached to the westbound passenger train to accommodate the Madison team, the town's cornet band, and the estimated 125 fans who wanted to watch the two teams play again in Howard a week later. The railroad promised an extra car at the end of the incoming freight to bring the group home again after the game. The correspondent from the *Madison Leader* who accompanied the group wrote, “Arriving in Howard they formed a line and marched in a body to the ball grounds. The Howard ladies are said not to have been accustomed

to attend ball games, but when they saw the large delegation of Madison ladies present, they also decided to witness the sport and turned out in full force.”²⁵

The game was a matchup between the big city Madison and small-town Howard. The home team scored two runs in the first inning but Madison pitcher Harry Howe put up goose eggs (shut them out) the rest of the game. Madison scored a run in the second, tied it in the ninth on a hit by Howe, and pushed another run across in the eleventh inning to take a 3-2 win. The Madison paper said, “...at times a good deal of bitterness was manifest. This, however, seemed to be the most apparent among the resident spectators who were inclined to ‘roar’ on general principles, and the remark was frequently made ‘I can lick any Madison man of my weight.’ Of course this sounded somewhat rural to the Madisonites and so no attention whatever was paid to it.”²⁶ The *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* said that the game, in which several hundred dollars changed hands, was “probably the best game ever put up in the state” and was for the championship of the South Dakota and added, “The immense crowd of spectators were enthusiastic in the extreme, and the cheers that went up at the close of the game were deafening.”²⁷

Other than a few pick-up and novelty games early in the season, little baseball was played in Sioux Falls until a club was organized in early August. This was blamed on the “removal of the baseball park fence last fall”, for reasons that weren’t explained. A committee formed a stock company and engaged the “Electric and Steam Motor Company” to build a fence around the grounds called Kingsbury Park, located at “block 2 Phillips addition to East Sioux Falls” and to erect a grandstand seating 300-400. It was thought the work could be completed in two weeks so the club directors began reaching out to area teams to schedule games. Prospects for a successful team were bolstered when they engaged shortstop A. V. Greene along with pitcher Eugene Kennedy and catcher Owen McCarrier (the battery for Howard in the final Madison game) for the rest of the season.

After needing to put up a “heavy guarantee”, the first opponent the new club was able to secure was Marshall, Minnesota for a morning-afternoon doubleheader on August 17. Marshall won the first game 10-4 but the local press explained, “The Sioux Falls team has never before played together and is consequently a little raw.” Marshall also took the afternoon game 2-1 and that defeat was blamed on Kennedy tiring (he also pitched the morning game) in the later innings. *The Argus-Leader* added, “...there was enough kicking to add spice to the game, but all matters were nicely adjusted by mutual compromise...”²⁸

“Two of the Egan baseballists being sick and unable to come, the manager of the club telegraphed to Dell Rapids for two players to meet them at the train. The telegram when it reached Dell Rapids read “band” players instead of ball players. When the train pulled into Dell Rapids, the Egan boys were met by two men, one with a big brass horn and the other with a cornet. As the baseball rules this year prohibit the use of base drums as chest protectors, and base horns as catching gloves, the Dell Rapids boys were left at home and the club filled out with Sioux Falls players.

Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, September 2, 1892

Sioux Falls wound up their abbreviated season by scheduling games with Egan and Parker during state fair week in early September. They split two at home and two at Egan but Egan backed out of the next set of games when their battery, pitcher Jordan and catcher Bud Jones, were engaged by Parker for their upcoming series with Sioux Falls. This angered Sioux Falls, not only because of the cancellation of the game, but the fact that Parker, who already had the battery of Howe and Keefe on their roster, continued to “load up” with more talent for the Sioux Falls series. For some reason Kennedy, the Sioux Falls pitcher, played second base in the opening game on September 13 (perhaps his arm hadn’t recovered from the doubleheader against Marshall), so Parker “loaned” pitcher Jordan to Sioux Falls for the day. However, Parker easily won the first game 11-4

With Howe and Keefe, Parker’s battery in the first game, not available for some reason, and Kennedy back on the mound for the home team, “The local players [Sioux Falls] are so confident of winning that they are betting their own money.”²⁹ However, game two turned out to be a tight, back and forth game with Parker scoring a run in the tenth inning to take a 10-9 win. Kennedy struck out 21 and allowed just five hits, but his teammates committed 11 errors behind him - the box score crediting Parker with just one of their runs being earned – and it wasn’t reported how much the players might have lost. Parker beat them again 9-8 the next day, “... a poorer display than the other two”, according to the *Argus-Leader*, thus ending the 1892 season in Sioux Falls.

“The Cyclone baseball team which went to Worthing last Saturday and beat the local team in a game of ball by a score of 11 to 3, are just recovering from the effect of their ride home. They were riding after dark and drove into a deep slough and becoming frightened they all jumped out into the water with the exception of Iver Swanson, who stayed in the wagon and succeeded in keeping the team from drowning. The rest of the crowd waded back to shore and ran to a farmhouse, getting out a farmer and team and pulled the Sioux Falls outfit out of the water. The baseballists arrived home Sunday after noon.

Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, July 7, 1893

Little competitive baseball was played in Sioux Falls during the mid-1890s because, they claimed, the best local players were engaged by teams from other towns. For example, in 1895 the battery of Eugene Kennedy and Owen McCarrier played in Storm Lake, Iowa, ad shortstop A. V. Greene in Cherokee, Iowa. The following year Kennedy was secured by Marshall, Minnesota for \$12 a week and board,³⁰ and former Sioux Falls stars Harry Howe, Keefe, and someone named Wilson, were playing with West Union, Iowa that summer.³¹

The ball game that garnered the most attention in the Sioux Falls paper in 1893 was a challenge by Sam Bear, captain of a team "from the trades" to Tug Wilson, captain of a nine of "strictly intellectual people", presumably the professional men of the city for a game on Decoration Day. As proof of their eligibility to be a member of the "trades" club, along with their position, each member's occupation was listed as follows; E.D Morcom, dealer in gold and hypodermic syringes. Mike Kelley, c, soap peddler. Sam Bear, p, dealer in almanacs, W. G. McKeenan, 1b, stone cutter, R. C. C. Lewis, 2b, paint pulveriser, Thomas Bohon, 3b, ink dispenser, Ed Lewis, ss,

literature lugger, R. E. Woodworth, lf, pill peddler, Art DeGood, cf, ham sandwiches and sausage, George Wheeler, rf, dealer in brand and sports. The reserves were W. H Rounds, dealer in second-hand clothing, George Lowry, wild animal trainer, and J. H Olmstead, wild cat schemer.³²

Apparently, conditions of the game could not be agreed upon because Wilson and Bear, who were to be the opposing pitchers in the game, were still "negotiating" in the press throughout the month of June. One the 16th, Bear was quoted as saying, "Ever since that time I have been trying to get manager Wilson to appoint a time for the contest, but he has put me off on one pretext or another until yesterday when he announced that it would be impossible for him to get his men together. Now the truth of the matter is I think, Wilson has got stale, in other words he has got a glass arm, and knows if he gets in the pitcher's box before my combination of ball and willow manipulators that his boasted reputation as a grapevine, back-action pitcher would be gone forever. Verily I believe that Tug Wilson's 'baseballastic' star has set."³³

Having had his skill as a pitcher questioned, Wilson responded later in the month in a letter to the editor of the *Argus-Leader* in which he said he went back through score sheets of the 35 games in which Bear had pitched and came up with the following statistics: won 3, lost 32, his batting percentage is .016, fielding, .087, stolen bases by him, 2, scored off him, 478, given bases on balls, 427, base hits off him, 1,371, taken out of box, 11 times, fell down, 11 times, scores by him, 0. Wilson went on to say, "Bear is composed of bones and wind, and is a sore winner, always before election. I will play him on July 1 at 2 o'clock as per former challenge. I deposit \$50 with the *Argus-Leader* on the result. Now Mr. Bear, either put up or shut up."³⁴

Bear responded a few days later. "I have been trying to figure out what the second addition of Tug Wilson's baseball challenge means. He issued a challenge, which I promptly accepted. Now he comes out with an 'amended complaint as it were, and names a Saturday, and the first of the month at that, for our game. He knows that is 'our busy day' and it looks to me as if he is working a little trick to get out of playing. If Wilson will name any day prior to next Saturday and give good assurance that he will not be conveniently called out of town on the day named, our team will be on the ground and ready to meet him. The only stipulation that I make is that Wilson must wear those blue baseball pants in the game."³⁵

Two days later, Bear covered Wilson's bet and "after much haggling and considerable newspaper controversy" the game was finally set for Wednesday June 28. However, the trash talking continued right up until game time between the two pitchers/captains, Bear saying that he "has been strengthening up his pitching arm by handling fifty-pound dumb bells for an hour every morning before sunrise" and Wilson countering that Dr. Onstad had, "successfully removed the glass from his 'good right arm."³⁶

After all the buildup, the game itself was somewhat anti-climactic. Wilson's professional men took and 11-3 after four innings but Bear's tradesmen scored six runs in the fifth to cut the lead to two runs. Wilson's club extended their lead with two in their half of the fifth and four more in the sixth. Bear's team staged a rally scoring six runs in the top of the seventh but came up a bit

short, Wilson hanging on to win 17-15. It was noted that the umpires, Lewis and Muller, "in spite of threats of violence made by those aggrieved stayed until the end."³⁷

As late as July 10, 1893, the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* said, "Interest in baseball in this city has been on the wane for some time."³⁸ But Baer and Wilson must have patched up their differences because the two men combined to organize a team later in July called the Cyclones and the *Argus-Leader* quickly changed their tune reporting, "A baseball craze seems to have stuck"³⁹ and they were able to secure a game against Worthing. Apparently neither team played well, a 21-17 win by the Cyclones, as the game report said, "Careless playing, wild pitching, hard hitting, and lack of enthusiasm characterized the game."⁴⁰

The Cyclones were able to secure a game at Dell Rapids later that month for \$50 side. The team went up there "without a competent battery [pitcher and catcher] and captain" and found themselves down 12-3 after seven innings. At some point during the game, it was discovered that Dell Rapids had loaded up with "four men there from Egan and one from Aberdeen" so, given this new knowledge, manager Joe McCabe wired head and instructed his team not to play for the money, and the Cyclones walked off the diamond and came home. This angered the Dells Rapids team as they, and the large crowd assembled, anticipated taking an easy \$50 off of Sioux Falls.

Salem secured one of the top pitchers in the region, Eugene Kennedy of Howard, and came to Sioux Falls in late August for a morning/afternoon double header. The Cyclones strengthened their team was well with pitcher C. M. Merkle "the phenom from Beaver Creek" and shortstop A. V. Greene "came on hike bike from Luverne to help the locals."⁴¹ It was decided to cancel the morning game to "spare the players for a good afternoon game" and what the local paper called "the best exhibition of baseball which has been given in Sioux Falls in two years"⁴² was won by Sioux Falls 5-1. The downside, in what turned out to be the last game of the season for the Cyclones, was that the crowd, and revenue from ticket sales, was so small that McCabe had to reach into his own pocket for \$20 to pay the expenses of the Salem team.

"...an accidental fly came over near him when he spread out his arms as if to embrace a long-lost friend, but the ball didn't care to be embraced just then."

Milbank Herald-Advance, July 13, 1894

The ball game that drew the most attention in Milbank in 1894 was when the county officials issued a challenge to the mayor for a game against the city officials on "the diamond adjoining the school building" on Saturday afternoon, July 7. As was the case in many of the informal novelty games, special rules were made up, and in this contest a tenth man playing behind the bat (catcher) was allowed for each squad. It was noted that some of the boys had secured baseball suits "which give them the appearance of belonging to a league nine" but most of the participants arrived in the most elaborate get up they could find. Sherriff Williams, pitcher for the

county nine “was clothed in a beautifully embroidered suit of white with a democratic badge neatly tacked on the most prominent part of his anatomy” while his teammate, Judge Bouck, the catcher, “wore a knitted suit which gave him the appearance of a brownie or a star performer in a black crook troupe.” The city nine scored twelve runs in their first at bat and the county nine countered with nine in their half of the first inning. The city officials led 42-26 when the game was mercifully ended after four innings prompting a small boy in attendance to remark that, “...he couldn’t see how a lot of men could grow up into manhood in a free country and know so little about baseball.”⁴³

“One thing however they should bear in mind, and that is that spectators when they attend a ballgame do not like to have the air filled with profanity or obscene language. The baseball diamond is not the place for any such conduct. Baseball is one of the finest, healthiest, most exciting outdoor sports in the world but it needs to be kept clean to have it attractive. Let the boys see that hereafter the crowd will not have any reason to complain.”

Huron Huronite, July 10, 1894

Trouble in Elk Point

Many baseball fans know that women played professional baseball during and after World War II from the 1992 movie *A League of Their Own* starring Tom Hanks. However, women had been playing baseball more than half century earlier. A women’s team called the Bloomers made a tour through southeastern South Dakota in early August of 1896 with stops in Yankton, Madison, and Mitchell and their schedule called for a game at the ball field on the fairgrounds in Elk Point on Sunday August 9. Sunday baseball was illegal in South Dakota at the time and several days before the game a group of ladies in Elk Point hired an attorney and forewarned the Bloomers of this fact, insisting that the game not take place. Their pleas “failed to have the desired effect”⁴⁴ and the game began as scheduled.

At some point after the game had begun Deputy Carter and his son Fred arrived on the grounds and arrested the Bloomers for violating the Sunday law against ball playing. They were driven in a wagon to the office of Judge Smythe who ordered they be taken to the courthouse. The Carters and their prisoners were followed by a, “howling mob of men and boys, many applying opprobrious epithets to the officers,”⁴⁵ said to number several hundred in one source, and between 300 and 400 in another. The crowd “rescued the dear things,” by overpowering the officers, causing serious injury to Fred, and the Bloomers were driven out of town “at a rapid gate.”⁴⁶ Monday morning a complaint was filed against the Elk Point players on the same charge “Sunday Breaking.” They pled guilty and were each fined \$1 plus costs, however, the following day, Judge Smythe dismissed all charges.

One of the more interesting games during the 1898 season occurred in Mitchell in late July when the town’s kid nine took on a group of hobos camped outside the city limits. The pitching matchup was Ernest Gregory for the kids against Texas Bill, and the youngsters won easily 17-8.⁴⁷ The tramp nine challenged the kids to a rematch a couple of weeks later with the stakes being that

if they won the kids were to provide them with supper. The hobos won the rematch 21-15 but the kid players reneged on their agreement. The *Mitchell Capital* said, "It is reported that a look of dismay came over the faces of the boys when they saw the game was against them and one by one, they quietly walked away and the tramps were without their supper." One of the tramps called the newspaper office to complain about their treatment but the editor, "...was unable to offer them anything other than sympathy in the loss of their supper." The *Capital* went on to report, "The tramp declared, however, that sympathy didn't do a thing toward alleviating the pangs of hunger which had been aroused by unusual exercise in the game of ball."⁴⁸

Webster and Aberdeen for the Title

Thomas Lawler, a prominent grain buyer in Day County, also doubled as the manager of the Webster ball team. When he began assembling his team in the spring of 1898, outside professionals were recruited but he made it known that local players were welcome to try out but would only make the team through "survival of the fittest"⁴⁹ Outside players included pitchers Frank O'Reagan from St. Paul, Eugene "Chesty" Cox, and catcher Charley Severens. Other members of the team included second baseman Dan Graham, "Old Hoss" Adams at first, and outfielder Frank Gruby⁵⁰. The baseball association made improvements to the ball grounds by extending the fence and set admission prices as follows: Grandstand seats, 25 cents, General Admission, including occupants of carriages, and anyone over age 12, 15 cents, and children under age 12, 10 cents. They also took two unusual steps. They issued season tickets to the press of neighboring towns and passed a resolution to, "...refuse admission to grounds of parties and their families who have refused to contribute to the team when solicited."⁵¹

They opened the season with a three-game series with Wheaton, said to be the "strongest aggregation in western Minnesota, with the first game in Wheaton on Saturday and the final two back in Webster on Memorial Day during the Old Settlers Day celebration. After arriving in Wheaton at 7:30 a.m., and short visit with friends, both clubs were led by the Wheaton Cornet Band in a street parade to the grounds where Webster was decisively defeated 22-2. Back in Webster, "stung by the Saturday defeat" Webster scored seven first-inning runs on their way to a 15-6 win. In the third game, before the largest crowd ever seen on the local grounds and said to be "the best amateur contest I ever witnessed", at least according to one old-time fan from Chicago in the grandstand that day, Webster won 6-3 behind the pitching of Chesty Cox. It was noted afterward, "...in the evening the citizens [of Webster] furnished carriages and treated the players of both teams to a drive around the city and later gave them a strawberry and ice cream treat at the ladies social."⁵²

The Aberdeen team organized in late May and built a new ballpark with a grandstand seating 400 from lumber collected from the fences and cattle sheds at the Grain Palace. However, the team had uneven success on the field, winning a few games at home but losing most of the time on the road, which was blamed on the fact that many of their top players were unable to get

off work to travel, resulting in them having to play short-handed away from home. Management promised “material changes” and that the club would be “greatly strengthened” meaning the acquisition of new players from out of town.

In early June Webster, a few miles east of Aberdeen, issued the following challenge printed in the *Aberdeen News*. “We understand that the Aberdeen base ball club claims the championship of South Dakota. The Webster club also claims the championship and hereby challenges the Aberdeen club to play a series of games to settle the question, and will, if required, put up any sum of money on each side you may name. Or we will play you a game here on friendly terms and a guaranty, and a game at Aberdeen on the same terms. The Webster club proposed publishing in all papers of the state its claim to the championship and its willingness to meet all comers.”⁵³

Aberdeen sustained a particularly ugly 19-4 loss at Ipswich in which the home team scored eight first inning runs and, according to a report in the *Ipswich Democrat*, “...the Aberdeen boys began to pout and kick and wanted to go home. After considerable coaxing, were prevailed to finish the game...” So before accepting the Webster challenge, the Aberdeen club underwent a complete re-organization. F. C. Hardy resigned as manager. With new management in place, a three-game series with Webster beginning Tuesday, June 28 was scheduled to settle the question, at least among the two teams who claimed the honor, of the state championship. The first game was to be played in Aberdeen, the second in Webster, and the third back in Aberdeen with the contract calling for the winner taking 60% of the gate.

Things started off on a sour note for Webster when, “on the way to Aberdeen about 25 citizens accompanied the ball team Tuesday, they were approached on train by a gang of hoodlums gathered at the train station at Bristol armed with pans, pails, drums, cow bells etc., prepared to hoot and insult the ball team as they passed through. A few dozen eggs were purchased at Andover and when the Bristol gang began to get in their work, Webster gave her rapid-fire guns with the result that the concert came quickly to a stop.”⁵⁴ When they arrived in Aberdeen Webster claimed that their opponents had added, “players from Eureka, Redfield, Wheaton, Vermillion, and even Minneapolis.” To make matters worse, Aberdeen won easily 14-6 and Webster’s losers share of the gate was just \$52, not nearly enough to cover their expenses for the trip.

Initially, Aberdeen backed out of their commitment to come to Webster for game two of the series but when they did come later in the month Webster turned the tables winning 14-1. This time Aberdeen accused Webster of importing (Webster did add the Drill brothers earlier in the season but reported no other roster moves). Manager Tom Lawler sent a letter to the Aberdeen papers denying the charge, but they refused to publish his letter.⁵⁵ They decided to play the rubber game, billed as for the championship of South Dakota, in Ortonville, Minnesota at the A. O. U. W. picnic a week later. Aberdeen loaded up by adding former major league pitcher Tony “Count” Mullane, catcher Harry Claytor of St. Paul, and “...other players from other points.”⁵⁶

The “Count” in Aberdeen

Tony Mullane was born in 1859 in County Cork, Ireland and immigrated with his family to the United States when he was three years old. Nicknamed the “Count” or the “Apollo of the Box” due to his handsome appearance, he won 284 games as a pitcher in thirteen major league seasons between 1881 and 1894 including five consecutive years (1882-1887) when he won thirty or more games. His career win total is one of the highest in history for a pitcher not in Baseball’s Hall of Fame but his most noted distinction was that he pitched both left and right-handed. After an injury to his right arm, he taught himself to throw with his left.

Despite his great talents, Mullane’s career was marked with numerous contract disputes, fines, suspensions, and controversy. While pitching for the Toledo Blue Stockings of the Union Association in 1884, his catcher was Moses Fleetwood Walker, one of the first black men to play in major league baseball. Mullane was quoted as saying that Walker. “...was the best catcher I ever worked with, but I disliked a Negro and whenever I had to pitch to him, I used to pitch anything I wanted without looking at his signals.”⁵⁷

Toward the end of his career, in 1883, the pitcher’s mound was moved five feet further from home plate, to the 60’ 6” of today, and the added distance, and his advanced age, was detrimental to his success. He lost 25 losses that year and the following season, 1884, his last in the majors, he allowed 16 runs in the first inning of a game against Boston. Mullane bounced around the minor leagues a few more years. In 1898 he pitched a few games with St. Paul and few more with Detroit of the Western League before being released in June when he took a job as an umpire in the league.

After his release by Detroit, and before his first umpiring assignment, Mullane was hired by Aberdeen for \$75 (cash in advance) to pitch the third game of their series against Webster at Ortonville on Friday, July 15. He allowed 14 runs to Webster in four innings pitched before being relieved by a local man named Albert Wright. The *Webster Reporter and Farmer* said, “[Webster] hammered out safe hits that sounded like hail stones on a tin roof.”⁵⁸ Meanwhile Webster’s O’Reagan held Aberdeen to just two hits in winning easily 14-1. It was said that the poor performance by their hired pitcher resulted in the loss of a \$200 bet on the game and fans lost another \$500 on side bets.

Mullane’s performance resulted in severe criticism by the local press. The *Aberdeen News* said Mullane, “...did about as much work as is done by the pitchers in the kid nines in Aberdeen”, and even suggested he may have been on the take with Webster gamblers adding, “Whether he is utterly incompetent or was playing into the hands of the Webster people it is hard to determine, but one thing is certain – he didn’t pitch ball at all. Had the Aberdeen management saved their \$75 and put Wright into the box at the beginning, the result of the game would have been far different.”⁵⁹

After basically being run out of town by Aberdeen management after the game, Mullane joined the Western League umpiring crew. He umpired a few more years in various minor leagues but continued to spark controversy, at one point having to be escorted off the grounds under police protection while working a game in Columbus, Ohio. After getting out of baseball he owned a saloon in Chicago for a while and later joined the Chicago Police Department achieving the rank of sergeant. He died in Chicago in 1944.

Although Webster was now acknowledged as the state champion, the two clubs cleared up their difference long enough to schedule another best three of five series in August, the first three in Aberdeen and the final two in Webster. The first game, at Aberdeen's new ballpark location (tract of land a block or two west of the Wisconsin House) was called a draw when play was stopped by rain after the eighth inning tied at seven each. The next day, Aberdeen took a 5-4 lead after seven innings but Webster scored eleven runs in the eighth to take a 15-5 win. Aberdeen squared the series at one game each with a 10-7 win the next day. The two clubs moved on to Webster all even at 1-1-1 and decided that if they split the final two games, they would play one more additional game to break the deadlock.

In the Friday game, which was Ladies Day, an "unusually large" crowd at the Webster ballpark saw pitchers Dahlquist and O'Reagan battle to a 4-4 tie after eight innings. Both teams were held scoreless in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh, but in the twelfth inning, Lew Drill singled, a hit by Chesty Cox hit sent him to third, and Drill scored on a sacrifice by Frank Gruby, giving Webster the 5-4 win. The *Aberdeen News* called the contest, "...best that was ever played in South Dakota,"⁶⁰ Ladies filled the grandstand again for the Saturday game and the two clubs played to a 5-5 tie after five innings. Webster scored four in the seventh to take a 9-5 lead but Aberdeen battled back with four runs of their own in the eighth inning to tie the score again. In the ninth, after two were out, Webster rallied for another dramatic win when the Drill brothers reached base on hits and Lew scored on a hit by winning pitcher Chesty Cox.

The ladies present showered flowers on the Webster players and after an earlier home run by Webster's Eddie Howard, "...it took him quite a while to gather up all the floral tributes thrown to him." The *Webster Reported* commented, "If one doubted the hold baseball has on the Webster public, if he were present Saturday his doubts would have been removed. The ladies have taken great interest in all the games this season and have proved than the generic 'fan' does not all belong to the masculine ranks."⁶¹ Despite the two heartbreaking losses, the Aberdeen club was welcomed back home by a large crowd, including the town band at the train station, and treated to a banquet.⁶²

Webster had now won three of the five games from Aberdeen in the series, and five of eight on the season, and overall finished 15-5-1 on the year. With no legitimate challengers, Webster declared themselves the champion baseball team of South Dakota for the 1898 season. Immediately after the Aberdeen series, the team disbanded with the players paid off and departing for home. Catcher Charley Severens landed a job as a railway fireman in Montevideo and Eugene

Cox left for White Bear Lake, Minnesota. Eddie Howard signed with Aberdeen for the rest of the year while Frank Drill hooked on with a harvest crew. His brother Lew contracted typhoid fever and remained in town until he recovered. Finally, Frank, O'Reagan returned to his home in St. Paul but his success in Webster attracted the attention of Charles Comiskey, manager of the St. Paul team of the Western League, and he promised O'Reagan a tryout with his club the following spring.

The 1899 Season

As early as March fans in Webster, then a town of about 1,500 people in Day County 45 miles east of Aberdeen formed a baseball organization and articles of incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State. When \$1,000 was quickly raised by selling 200 shares at \$5 each, they immediately went about assembling a team of mostly professional players. Frank O'Reagan, who pitched for Moorhead, Minnesota in the Red River Valley League in 1897 and in Webster the previous summer, was selected captain. Their battery included three future major leaguers, pitchers Bob Blewett and Jake Thielman and catcher Jack Zalusky. The Webster lineup also included several other players who would later play professional baseball including first baseman Ralph Frary, second baseman Spencer Abbott, third baseman Ned Egan, and outfielder Dan Beecher. The member of the team with the most recognizable name was shortstop Ignatius "Iggy" Comiskey, younger brother of the famous Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey.

The Indian Industrial School at Flandreau, South Dakota was one of many boarding schools built for American Indian children in the late 1800s. Congress appropriated \$50,000 and in March 1893 work began on three buildings, along with a barn and boiler house, which were erected across the Big Sioux River from the town of Flandreau. The original capacity when the facility opened in 1894 was for 100 students and, over the next five years additional land was purchased and more buildings erected, and by 1899 230 students attended the school.⁶³ Athletic sports were an important part of the curriculum at Indian boarding schools. Probably the most well-known was the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania whose football team gained national prominence. Among the other sports, a baseball team was formed at the Flandreau school and by the late 1890s, led by a star pitcher named Chris Eastman, had gained a reputation as one of the best amateur teams in eastern South Dakota.

The Flandreau Indians took an extended tour into Iowa in June of 1899 playing a game against Upper Iowa University in Decorah and on their way home stopped in Sioux City, Iowa for a game against Sioux Falls that was billed as for the championship of South Dakota. Flandreau easily beat Sioux Falls 16-3 and the *Sioux City Journal* stated that fully 12,000 people from "South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and northwestern Iowa" attended the game and described the scene the following way. "The crowd extended from either wing of the backstop halfway all around the outfield, and in places was fifty feet in depth. Back under the clusters of trees spectators sat in carriages, and every point of vantage on the bluff across the railroad tracks was occupied. The park

people said the crowd was by far the largest that ever saw a game at Riverside. With comparable patience and only a little complaint, the thousands sat upon the ground with legs cramped, or stood in the broiling sun until they became almost prostrated with the heat, watching the game. It was an enthusiastic and appreciative crowd and every good play was generously applauded. The sharp crack from the bat which would follow a hard drive invariably brought detonations from the bass drums of the musicians in the crowd.”⁶⁴

Later that month the Flandreau Indians handed a strong Webster team their first loss of the season and in early July the two teams had a rematch in a game played at Aberdeen. A special train with three extra coaches were added to bring the estimated 150 Webster rooters to Aberdeen. The train even stopped to pick up the Groton band, and when they arrived in town, “. . .the party formed in line and marched directly to the ball ground to the music of the band, ladies as well as gentlemen taking their places in the line of the march. The procession made a long line, four abreast.”⁶⁵ The game was close after three innings, Webster holding a 1-0 lead, but they surged ahead of Flandreau winning 14-4. The game report provided a possible explanation for the Flandreau defeat saying, “The field work by the Indians was good in all respects, the errors being comparatively few, but their batting was light, their weakness playing in that part of their work.”⁶⁶

The *Aberdeen Daily News* described the Indian team as follows. “The Flandreau Indian nine is known all over the northwest as one of the strongest amateur teams, and the Indians are in demand to play in Iowa, Minnesota, and North Dakota, as well as in different parts of this state, and for several year they have been a strong attraction. The members of the nine are a stocky, sturdy lot of educated young Indians who delight to play the game and understand it well. They take their places on the diamond and play the game for all that it is worth without a word being spoken. There is no taking back to the remarks of ‘rooters’ and little kicking over the decisions of the umpire, and it is a pleasure to see them play...”⁶⁷ The *News* further added, “They seldom uttered a word while playing and paid but little apparent attention to the yelling, horn blowing, and other disturbing noises made by the Webster and Groton people...”⁶⁸

“After the game was finished, the crowd which had come from points east by the special train marched from the grounds downtown, headed by the Groton band and gave loud expressions to their delight over the victory of their invincible players. After supper the Aberdeen band appeared and gave a concert for the benefit of the visitors. It lasted until time for the train east, when the excursionists marched to the Milwaukee depot. Accompanied by 300 or 400 Aberdeen people, who went to see them safely started for home. The passenger platform at the depot was crowded full of people, who cheered for Webster, for the Indians, for Aberdeen, for the bands, and for about everything anybody could suggest. The train was loaded to the platforms and as it pulled out there were more cheers for the victors and for the vanquished and the day’s sport ended with the best of feeling by all concerned.”⁶⁹

Another Flandreau’s chief rivals was the club from Rock Rapids, Iowa, said to be the best in the state and, “composed of players from league teams, a pitcher from the Minneapolis league

team...⁷⁰ At first the Indians composed entirely of students at the school, but at some point, decided they needed to add outside players to remain competitive. The two teams scheduled a series of games in Pipestone, Minnesota in late July and for these games, "...the Indians had Hildebrant (sic), Princeton's crack hurler and a number of other players."⁷¹ This was 21-year-old Arthur "Doc" Hillebrand and the other players were his brother 19-year-old Homer Hillebrand (who would later play in the major leagues), George Shelafo, and Bud Jones, the former Aberdeen player. The Flandreau team was now, "...minus several Indians whose places are filled with some first-class professionals..."⁷² and had transitioned from an amateur school team to a full-fledged semi-pro team.

The Hillebrands

Arthur "Doc" Hillebrand was one of the most famous athletes in the country and generally considered the best working in the region at the time. One report stated, "His manner of handling the ball is nothing short of phenomenal, both as to speed and control, and the wonder is that batters are able to find him at all." The same story noted that Boston had made an offer of \$3,000 to sign him for the rest of the season.⁷³ In fact, when teams scheduled games with Flandreau, the agreement usually called for an assurance that Hillebrand would pitch, meaning teams were more concerned about driving up interest and gate receipts, even if it meant Hillebrand defeated the local team.

He pitched several strong games while in South Dakota but was hit hard in others, perhaps meaning he wasn't as good as advertised, or that the level of competition on the semi-pro teams was that good. Ironically, Art's brother Homer, who usually caught or played centerfield while in Flandreau, reached the major leagues, pitching in 18 games for the Pittsburgh Pirates between 1905 and 1908, while the more celebrated Art never reached the big leagues

Sioux Falls

In May 1899, The Sioux Falls "Greenleafs", named for the sponsor of the team, the Greenleaf Cigar Company, reorganized under the "Sioux Falls Baseball Club", but under manager W. P. McKeever, the Greenleafs had little early success. As an example of the fortunes of Sioux falls baseball early in 1899, the committee planning the Fourth of July celebration at the little town of Beresford, South Dakota advertised a ball game between teams from Vermillion and Sioux Falls, with purse of \$75 to be divided \$50 for the winners and \$25 for the losers. Rather than the regular "Greenleaf" club representing Sioux Falls, the team that showed up in Beresford was, "...three or four misfits claiming to hail from Sioux Falls, assisted by some country boys they picked up along the road."⁷⁴ After Vermillion won 25-2, the ruse was found out, and the committee withheld the \$25 payout or Sioux Falls.

At least one member of the Sioux Falls club that played that day, Levant Hartwick, played on the Tuti-Fruti's, an under age 17 ball team in Sioux Falls. During the game he was struck in the head by a pitched ball, fell to the ground unconscious, but after being revived finished the game.

Later that evening he had taken ill and left the train undetected at one of the stops on the way home that night. It wasn't until several days later that his body was discovered in a clump of bushes along the railroad tracks. Obviously suffering from a concussion, it was assumed Hartwick had become bewildered, attempted to walk home, and then climbed into the bushes to rest, where he died. The entire Tuti-Fruti ball club attended his funeral in Sioux Falls a few days later.⁷⁵

Sioux Falls was planning a week-long Carnival event in mid-September and local businessmen considered adding a baseball tournament as one of the attractions. In order to have a strong local participant, in July a committee was formed to re-organize the Greenleafs into a new ball team call the "Carnival of Sports Team".⁷⁶ The change may have been prompted, in part, by a mid-July game against Lake Benton,, Minnesota that, although Sioux Falls won 20-14, the *Argus-Leader* called it the "...rankest game ever witnessed in the city", and referred to the local team as "McKeever's Misfits".⁷⁷ The Carnival club, under the direction of the Sioux Falls Businessmen's League, met in late July to perfect the organization. A three-man executive committee – W. J. Keating, W. H. Rounds, and C. P. Bates were appointed with full control of club operations. Paul Tupper Wilke was elected secretary and treasurer B. H ReQua reported that more than \$400 in subscriptions had been pledged and \$250 collected to date. That sum, along with another \$250 thrown in by 40 businessmen, businessmen gave the new organization the working capital to fund team operations over the final two months of the season.

The grounds at the Oval were also improved, "The weeds behind the outfield are being cut down and the ground for a considerable distance back of the diamond being scraped. There is some talk of removing the grandstand to a position farther southeast which would give occupants of the stands a better view and would also give the third baseman a better field to work in."⁷⁸ The executive committee also reported that a deal had been reached with the Greenleaf Company for use of the grounds at the Oval for \$75 until October 15. The deal also stipulated that after that date the club could purchase the Oval outright for an additional \$100.⁷⁹

The upcoming Carnival may have been a factor, but the commitment to semi-professional baseball in Sioux Falls was likely influenced by the desire to remain competitive with area small towns such as Flandreau, Webster, and Perry and Rock Rapids, Iowa, all of whom employed professional players. The Businessmen's Club soon formed a committee to contact new players, and their first acquisition was catcher Frank McCarrier, a Former Sioux Falls resident, now working as a cigar maker in Yankton. Pitcher O. E. McCleary and Robert Warner, a professional player from Illinois, was signed as field manager for the new Carnival club, replacing McKeever. When he arrived in town to consult with backers of the Carnival club it was decided to hire seven professional players and he went about contacting prospective players and arranging dates. New bats, balls, bases, mitts, and a catcher's mask and chest protector were ordered along with a new set of orange uniforms with red stockings with "Carnival Ball Club" written across the breasts of the shirts.⁸⁰

For the past several years, Western League teams in Minneapolis and St. Paul made a practice of “loaning” excess players to independent teams in North Dakota, with the understanding that the Minnesota clubs retained their contract rights and could be recalled at any time. This was advantageous for all parties as it gave young, inexperienced players a chance to play regularly, and made talented players available to small towns. It was noted that when Warner was building the Carnival team that Walt Wilmot of Minneapolis, “...offering the services of pitcher Hutchinson. The Minneapolis team have more pitchers than they can use.”⁸¹ Warner turned down this particular offer because he had his eye on pitchers, he felt were better than Hutchinson.

It was decided that the Carnival would “open” their new season against a weaker opponent, rather than facing the stronger clubs in Iowa, or Webster or Flandreau in South Dakota. Although it was said Madison employed five players from Chicago, that team was chosen but when Madison backed out at the last minute, the only available opponent was Rock Rapids. The Rock Rapids Crimson featured brothers Jake and Henry Thielman of St. Cloud, Minnesota, both of whom would later play in the major leagues, and former Sioux Falls resident A. V. “Grandpa” Greene at shortstop. Drill. Not knowing what to expect, Carnival played competitively against the Crimson, trailing just 6-5 after seven innings, but Rock Rapids scored six runs in the eighth inning to take the game 12-5. Sioux Falls tried out a new pitcher named Fair, and quickly concluded that he was “in too fast a company” released him immediately after the game.

Indians and Canaries for the Title

On August 2, Flandreau swept a doubleheader from Webster to remain undefeated. The local paper went so far as to claim the sweep, “...gives conclusively the championship of South Dakota to Flandreau”, and the *Lake Benton* (Minnesota) *Clarion* proclaimed the Hillebrand battery, “the best combo out of the league.”⁸² The problem was that Hillebrand pitched both games, making him unavailable when the Indians faced the Sioux Falls Carnival team the next day. Flandreau position players Shelafo and Munroe were battered for a dozen hits as Sioux Falls handed the Indians their first defeat by a score of 12-1. With Art Hillebrand back in the box the next day, the two teams engaged in a scoreless tie until Sioux Falls scored in the eleventh to take a thrilling 1-0 win. In a game that was described by the *Argus-Leader* as, “greatest game of baseball ever played in this state, one which will be talked about in the state for years.”⁸³ “Hats were thrown in the air and old men and women were shouting with joy”, at the conclusion.

After their strong start Webster had lost several recent games so management made a quick trip to St. Paul and Minneapolis for reinforcements before their series against Sioux Falls. Webster took an early 7-1 lead but Sioux Falls battled back to take a 9-8 win. Upon arriving home on the Burlington freight train the ball team was met at the depot by the town band and a thousand citizens. They all marched to the rooms of the Dakota Club where the players were, “...taken in and given the best in the house.” Player compensation wasn’t published but it was noted that fans who had won more than \$300 in bets and showed their appreciation by paying each player \$5 for

a homerun and \$3 for each double. "Under the table" money was also provided as, "Each member of the team was also remembered with a slight financial gift as an appreciation for the work accomplished."⁸⁴

The win pushed the Carnival winning streak to eight games and the team continued to improve by adding pitcher Tom Drummy of Kansas City. He held Webster to four hits in an 15-1 romp on Saturday August 12 and the next day the club went to Rock Rapids. Most visiting teams experienced a "homer" umpire in Rock Rapids so Sioux Falls brought their own man to officiate, Elmer Halling of Duluth, but the request for a replacement was refused by Rock Rapids manager Snyder. Despite this, and the fact that several hundred local roosters lined up behind the Sioux Falls bench and, "...heaped all sorts of personal abuse upon the players in hopes of rattling them", Carnival won again 14-4

The only downside to the Carnival victories were complaints about the behavior of the fans. After the Webster win the *Argus-Leader* admonished the local roosters saying, "...support of the home team does not require abusive treatment of the visiting players, and the roasting of the umpire whenever a decision happens or appears to be adverse to the local club", and further warned, "...unless something is done to put a stop to hoodlumism in the grand stand, the patronage is bound to fall off..."⁸⁵ At a later Flandreau game fans were chastised for watching the game for free instead of paying their 25-cent admission fee. The crowd was estimated at between 600 and 700 and roughly 500 bought a ticket but, "...two hundred sat on the viaduct or perched on the top of vehicles and took in the game without contributing their quarter to assist in maintaining the club...It is a disgrace to the city to think that people in good circumstances will sponge their way to ball games."⁸⁶ Because lower gate receipts meant less of a cut shared with Flandreau, a couple of weeks later the *Argus-Leader* printed an item from the *Flandreau Herald* that called Sioux Falls is ..."a town of monumental cheap skates."⁸⁷

The following week Sioux Falls split a two-game series in Flandreau, won against Pipestone, Minnesota (with several Webster players in their lineup) and then hosted Rock Rapids for two games. New pitcher Jack Hart, a left-hander from Rock Island, Illinois started for Sioux Falls but surrendered four runs in the first two innings and was replaced by Drummy. Carnival chipped away finally tying the score a four all after nine innings while Drummy kept putting up goose eggs. The score remained tied until the fifteenth when Sioux Falls third baseman Jake Schaffer reached on an error, stole second with, "...one of his famous head on slides" and scored on a hit by Morrison. Drummy pitched 13 consecutive scoreless innings to pick up the 5-4 win.

The club next left for Webster for a three-game series. Hundreds of fans back in Sioux Falls followed the action on a bulletin board at the corner of Main Avenue and Ninth Street as they dropped the opener 4-2, a game blamed on errors, lucky hits on the part of Webster, and the fact that the Carnival players had played a fifteen-inning game the day before and rode all night on the train. Webster scored two in the ninth to take a 4-3 win the next day. In the third game, Sioux Falls scored eight runs in the first inning off of Webster starter William Dahlquist and won easily 9-4.

The two teams then took the train over to Aberdeen to resume their series. Carnival manager J. H. Snyder planned to start either Hart or Drummy but Drummy had a sore arm and, "...the former [Hart] got too familiar with the whiskey bottle and was at once released" so he planned to start Jackson, a college pitcher from Madison [Wisconsin] University. However, later in the day "Hart begged another trial" and was put in the box in Aberdeen.⁸⁸

First, the teams couldn't agree on an umpire so two players, Jack Murphy of Webster and Jackson of Sioux Falls officiated. In addition, the playing field in Aberdeen was in poor shape. "Owing to work being done on the ground, the diamond was moved for yesterday's game several feet closer the grandstand and for this reason many foul balls escaped the catchers. The outfield was also in very bad shape, necessarily limiting the territory covered by the fielders, so a number of fly balls dropped to the ground that would have been caught."⁸⁹ It also may have been that the reinstated Hart was still feeling the effects of his drinking binge, but Webster won again 10-7, taking three of four from Sioux Falls on the trip. However, before leaving town, maybe as an act of revenge, Sioux Falls signed Webster's two best pitchers, Jake Thielman and Bob Blewett, both future major leaguers, and the depleted Webster team disbanded for the season.

Meanwhile, Flandreau defeated Perry, Iowa 12-3 at Sioux City before an estimated 8,000 fans (possibly because the larger town meant a larger crowd). Through mid-August the Indians had won 21 of 33 games, not including the five games, "stolen from the boys by umpires", and according to the *Flandreau Herald*, the Indians and claimed to have the best club in the state. The *Argus-Leader* of Sioux Falls caught wind of this claim and reminded readers that the Carnival team had recently won three of four from Flandreau and disputed the claim so another series of games was scheduled between the two teams in late August.

The first game was close over the first three innings but the calls by the umpire, "a Minneapolis traveling man who claimed to understand the game" were so bad that Flandreau captain Bud Jones objected, took himself out of the game, removed his pitcher Hillebrand, but kept playing, "just to get their share of the gate receipts (\$166)."⁹⁰ The game became a laugher, eventually won by Sioux falls 16-1. According to Flandreau point of view, Sioux Falls, "...exhibited their 'birkshire' qualities to pull in the whole purse by putting a blind umpire in the game, who was to throw it to them by his decisions", and Jones only pulled his team off the field after, "... they plainly saw the deal fixed up."⁹¹ The next day Sioux Falls' reinstated pitcher Hart shoutout the Indians 6-0. The Carnival clubs had now won five of six against Flandreau.

The two teams next planned to square off in Sioux Falls on Labor Day in a game sponsored by the Department of Labor. However, Sioux Falls fans were so disgusted with the actions of Jones in the previous game they threatened to boycott the ballpark if Flandreau played, so Sioux Falls withdrew the invitation. Flandreau accepted an invitation to play at Pipestone, Minnesota and beat the local team 8-3. The next challenge for the Indians was a re-match with Webster in Chamberlain early in September. The Milwaukee Railroad used 60 coaches, divided into six trains, "...the largest ever run into a South Dakota point"⁹², to bring an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 people to town

for the contest. Hillebrand was “practically invincible” as fully 8,000 people witnessed Flandreau win easily 12-2.⁹³

Sioux Falls won at Luverne, Minnesota 6-4 and then, to replace the planned Flandreau game, scheduled a Sunday home game with Adrian, Iowa and Luverne on a Labor Day. The Adrian lineup featured Harry Burrell, who had pitched briefly with St. Louis of the American Association, then considered a major league, in 1891 but he must have been past his prime as the Carnival club knocked him out of the box in a 17-1 thrashing. They followed that up by easily beating Luverne 13-4 the next day. Sioux Falls had established themselves as unquestionably the top team in the region and claimed the “...champion team of the Northwest (baring league teams) for 1899.”⁹⁴ With most of the area teams, with the exception of Flandreau having disbanded by early September, Sioux Falls began looking for stiffer competition.

Many professional teams took tours after their league seasons ended, playing against local semi-pro teams. Manager Snyder was able to complete negotiations with Joe Cantillon, manager of the Milwaukee Brewers of the Western League for three games during the Carnival, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, September 13-15. The Milwaukee club featured several players who would go on to the major leagues including pitchers Charlie Check, Bill Reidy, and Bert Husting, outfielders George Nicol and Bunk Congalton, George Rettger, and infielder Bill Gray. Although he didn't make the trip, a 36-year-old Connie Mack would up his playing career with Milwaukee in 1899 before going on to manage the Philadelphia Athletics for half a decade.

The first game was rained out and the Thursday game didn't start until 4 o'clock to allow fans to first attend the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show that was taking place adjacent to the ball diamond at the Oval. The Argus-Leader said the local boys, “...lacked ginger both in the field and at the bat.”⁹⁵ as Milwaukee won easily 9-3. In the Friday game Carnival third baseman Jake Schaffer and second baseman Bobby Warner made several outstanding defensive plays to support starting pitcher Bob Blewett as Sioux Falls won 7-3. Milwaukee was scheduled to go to Sioux City for a game Sunday but were persuaded to cancel that game and stay over in Sioux Falls another day. On a cold and disagreeable Saturday afternoon Milwaukee downed the locals 13-6 but on just one day of rest, Blewett went to the mound Sunday and relying mostly on, “floaters and drops” shutout the Brewers 2-0, allowing Sioux Falls to split the four games with Milwaukee. After the final game, “...the crowd broke onto the diamond and went wild over the result of the game.”⁹⁶

The Flandreau Indians, the only other team left playing in the area, dropped a 12-9 decision, a game which featured a triple play, to the Riversides in Sioux City in early September. After the game the Hillebrand brothers left the team to return to college but the Indians and Carnivals squeezed in three more games at Slayton, Minnesota. The first two were close games won by Sioux Falls 12-7 and 10-9 but in the third contest they rapped 27 hits, demolishing the depleted Indians 22-1, ending the season for both clubs. After reorganizing in early August, the Sioux Falls Carnival club won 27 of 35 games, including eight of ten from Flandreau, thus settling the question of superiority in southwest South Dakota for the 1899 season.

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- ¹ “Base Ball Matters”, *Mitchell Capital*, July 4, 1890
- ² *Aberdeen News*, January 19, 1890
- ³ On November, President Benjamin Harrison signed legislation making North and South Dakota the 38th and 39th states in the union.
- ⁴ “Base Ball”, *Madison Leader*, August 5, 1890
- ⁵ “Brutally Slaughtered”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 13, 1890.
- ⁶ “Base Ball”, *Madison Leader*, September 10, 1890.
- ⁷ “A 3-Time Loser”, *Madison Leader*, September 13, 1890.
- ⁸ “Won In the Sixth”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 21, 1891.
- ⁹ “Won In the Sixth”,
- ¹⁰ “Better Give It Up”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 22, 1891.
- ¹¹ “Baseball”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 29, 1891.
- ¹² *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 21, 1891.
- ¹³ “Not In It”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 23, 1891.
- ¹⁴ “A Baseball Fake”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 24, 1891.
- ¹⁵ *Madison Leader*, August 12, 1891.
- ¹⁶ To Make a Tour of the East, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 19, 1891.
- ¹⁷ Turner County’s Car, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 21, 1891.
- ¹⁸ *Parker New Era*, August 8, 1891.
- ¹⁹ *Parker New Era*, July 11, 1891.
- ²⁰ *Parker New Era*, August 15, 1891.
- ²¹ “Base Ball” *Quad City (Davenport, Iowa) Times*, August 23, 1891.
- ²² *Turner County Herald*, September 19, 1891.
- ²³ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, May 9, 1892.
- ²⁴ Madison Vs. Howard: Howard People Accuse Their Own Players of Throwing the Game”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 27, 1892.
- ²⁵ “Aint In It”, *Madison Leader*, July 29, 1892.
- ²⁶ “Aint In It”.
- ²⁷ “Great Baseball”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 29, 1892.
- ²⁸ “A Great Game”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 19, 1892.
- ²⁹ “An Exiting Finish”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 15, 1892.
- ³⁰ *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, June 13, 1896.
- ³¹ *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, May 4, 1896.
- ³² *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, May 16, 1893.
- ³³ “Wilson Weakens”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, June 14, 1893.
- ³⁴ “Play Ball”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, June 21, 1893.
- ³⁵ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, June 24, 1893.
- ³⁶ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, June 26, 1893.
- ³⁷ “Wilson Vs Bear”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, June 29, 1893.
- ³⁸ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 10, 1893.
- ³⁹ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 14, 1893.
- ⁴⁰ “Base Ball”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 20, 1893.
- ⁴¹ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 29, 1893.
- ⁴² “A Great Game”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 31, 1893.
- ⁴³ “Play Bawl”, *Milbank Herald-Advance*, July 13, 1894.
- ⁴⁴ *Union County Courier*, August 13, 1896.
- ⁴⁵ “Bloomer Girls Arrested”, *Canton Advocate*, August 14, 1896.
- ⁴⁶ “Released Bloomer Girls”, *Aberdeen News*, August 12, 1896.
- ⁴⁷ *Mitchell Capital*, July 29, 1898.
- ⁴⁸ “Wouldn’t Feed the Tramps”, *Mitchell Capital*, August 12, 1898.
- ⁴⁹ *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, April 21, 1898.
- ⁵⁰ “Notes”, *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, May 19, 1898
- ⁵¹ *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, April 21, 1898.

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- ⁵² “Base Ball Games” *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, June 2, 1898.
- ⁵³ “They’re After Us”, *Aberdeen News*, June 9, 1898.
- ⁵⁴ “Punk Baseball Team”, *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, July 7, 1898.
- ⁵⁵ “Glorious Revenge”, *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, July 14, 1898.
- ⁵⁶ “Gold Bricked” *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, July 21, 1898.
- ⁵⁷ <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1147947-moses-fleetwood-walker-the-forgotten-man-who-actually-integrated-baseball>
- ⁵⁸ *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, July 28, 1898.
- ⁵⁹ “Webster’s Champions”, *Aberdeen News*, August 1, 1898.
- ⁶⁰ “Baseball Matters”, *Aberdeen News*, August 6, 1898.
- ⁶¹ “Champions!”, *Webster Reporter and Farmer*, August 11, 1898.
- ⁶² “Gave Then a Reception”, *Aberdeen News*, August 8, 1898.
- ⁶³ “Indian Industrial School at Flandreau”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, January 29, 1900.
- ⁶⁴ “Indians Defeat Sioux Falls”, *Sioux City (Iowa) Journal*, June 19, 1899.
- ⁶⁵ “Ball Game Today”, *Aberdeen Daily News*, July 7, 1899.
- ⁶⁶ “Indians Beaten”, *Aberdeen Daily News*, July 8, 1899.
- ⁶⁷ “Ball Game Today”.
- ⁶⁸ “Indians Beaten”, see above.
- ⁶⁹ “Indians Beaten”.
- ⁷⁰ *Minneapolis Journal*, July 21, 1899
- ⁷¹ “Rock Rapids Defeated”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 20, 1899.
- ⁷² *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 3, 1899.
- ⁷³ “Flandreau wins The First”, *Aberdeen News*, July 20, 1900.
- ⁷⁴ “Misfit Baseballists”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 8, 1899.
- ⁷⁵ “Vant Hartwick Dead”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 7, 1899.
- ⁷⁶ “Carnival Ball Club”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 10, 1899.
- ⁷⁷ “A Rank Ball Game”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 15, 1899.
- ⁷⁸ “Opening Ball Game”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 27, 1899.
- ⁷⁹ “Base Ball Meeting”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 31, 1899.
- ⁸⁰ “Are Arranging Date”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 25, 1899.
- ⁸¹ “Base Ball Gossip”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, July 28, 1899.
- ⁸² “Webster Worsted”, *Moody County (Flandreau) Enterprise*, August 3, 1899.
- ⁸³ “Was Heart Breaking”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 5, 1899.
- ⁸⁴ “Met by the Band”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 14, 1899.
- ⁸⁵ “Hoodlumism and Baseball”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 12, 1899.
- ⁸⁶ “Was Heart Breaking”.
- ⁸⁷ *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 18, 1899.
- ⁸⁸ “Eight in One Inning”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 24, 1899.
- ⁸⁹ “Webster Won Out”, *Aberdeen News*, August 25, 1899.
- ⁹⁰ “Stop the Papers”, *Minneapolis Journal*, August 30, 1899.
- ⁹¹ “The Sioux Falls Game”, *Moody County (Flandreau) Enterprise*, August 31, 1899.
- ⁹² “Big Crowd at Chamberlain”, *Sioux City (Iowa) Journal*, September 4, 1899.
- ⁹³ “Chamberlain’s Big Crowd”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 5, 1899.
- ⁹⁴ “For Carnival Week”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, August 31, 1899.
- ⁹⁵ “Was Without Ginger”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 14, 1899.
- ⁹⁶ “We Shut Them Out”, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, September 18, 1899.