



Biographical Research Committee Monthly Report
May 1993

Dave Rowe Found

Dave Rowe, outfielder from 1877 to 1888 with a variety of teams and the brother of Jack Rowe, has been found. And for the second consecutive month, I win the *Find of the Month* award. (It's easy for me to win since I pick the winner.)

I had been looking for Rowe for a number of years with little success. I was interested in him since he managed Kansas City in 1886 and 1888, compiling a stellar 44-127 won-lost record. Anyway, I had located his family in the 1870 Jacksonville, Illinois census and then found Dave and his wife, Martha, in the 1900 Illinois census. I had several notes indicating that he had moved to Omaha and then to Denver, Colorado. I had no luck tracing him in either location.

Then I received a phone call from Jay Sanford, a SABR member living in Arvada, Colorado, Jay had researched Dave in Denver and had located the graves of Dave's wife and mother. Jay told me that Dave had left Colorado for parts unknown.

Since I knew that Rowe was born in Pennsylvania, moved to Illinois, then to Nebraska, then to Colorado, it seemed that Dave was moving progressively west, kind of a manifest destiny. So I grabbed the 1920 California census and looked him up and there he was at the age of 65, living in Los Angeles with his daughter and son-in-law.

I sent \$8.00 to California to search for a death certificate and waited patiently for two months for them to write and tell me that Rowe didn't die between 1920 and 1929. Off went another \$8.00 and another two month wait but the death certificate arrived showing that Rowe died in Glendale, California on December 9, 1930. He is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery, a site which is the final resting place for many famous people,

among them Casey Stengel.

Since Rowe was on our Top 20 Most Wanted List, he will be replaced by Jimmy Wood, who was featured as our February 1993 *Mystery of the Month*.

Maybe If I Changed My Name To Cobb

In February of 1992 I changed the data on James Barron of the 1874 Lord Baltimores from information sent in by Bob Tiemann. James Barron was a St. Louis player who was playing in St. Louis on the same days the other Barron was playing for Baltimore. Bob suspected that Barron was a pseudonym as the newspapers often had "Barron" in quotation marks, a journalistic trick of the time to show an assumed name.

Bob Richardson has determined that "Barron" (note the same journalistic trick here) is really Oscar Bielaski. When Barron debuted on June 19, he occupied Bielaski's position as well as his position in the batting order. Later in the year, Bielaski returns with no explanation ever being made for his disappearance. On occasion one newspaper showed "Barron" and another showed Bielaski, but at no time did they ever appear together. At the end of the year, the *New York Clipper* published statistics of all player who appeared in at least 8 games. Although "Barron" appeared in 17 games, he is not listed; these games appear under Bielaski's record. Then in 1878, New Bedford visited Washington to play the Nationals. One day Bielaski appeared in right field and a week later it was the mysterious Mr. "Barron."

The name change seemed to help Bielaski since he hit .289 as "Barron" and only .206 as Bielaski. Good work by Bob Richardson!

New Members

Please welcome Gary Fink, 4205 Mira Loma Drive, Reno, Nevada 89502 to the biographical committee. Gary's code number will be F1.

Old Hatten

Andy McCue sent me an excerpt from the book, Rex Barney's Thank Youuuuu that claimed Joe Hatten was four years older than thought. Anybody want to check that out?

Phenomenal Simenic

Oops, make that Phenomenal Smith. I always get those two guys mixed up. Joe Simenic researched Phenomenal Smith's career record to ensure that all the games credited to Phenomenal are his. The nine games that he pitched for Baltimore of the Union Association in 1884 are in question. Can someone check the Baltimore papers for that period and find out who pitched those games?

Willard Holland

Joe Dittmar sent me an obituary of Willard Holland who did die July 19, 1930 in Philadelphia. Now all we need to do is confirm that this is the ballplayer. His wife's name was Ellen and he was a fireman. Can anyone tie him to baseball?

Shortest Manager

Pete Morris sends along the information that Louis Heilbronner was 4 foot 6 and weighed less than 100 pounds. Can you see him arguing nose to knee with Ken Kaiser?

Debuts

Last year, *USA Today Baseball Weekly* began listing information on players as they made their major league debut, something that is a great help to this committee. My only complaint was that they didn't print the player's complete name, only his use name. I spoke with Lisa Winston, who writes the debuts, toward the latter part of last year and asked if she could put that in. She said she would do that and I noticed that they started doing it this year.

The third week of the season the complete names didn't appear for some reason. Lisa called me personally, apologized for the names not being there, and gave me the complete names herself. After some of the troubles I've had getting biographical data, it's nice to find a sportswriter as accomodating as Lisa Winston and I hope that some of you write her and let her

know how much you appreciate her debut column.

Another Famous Tate Alumnus

Last month I mentioned that Tom Gettinger's great grandson is the star pitcher for Tate High School in Gonzalez, Florida near Pensacola. Don Sutton, Travis Fryman, and Jay Bell are graduates of Tate. I didn't realize that Bob Richardson of our committee is also a Tate graduate. Bob is undoubtedly the most famous baseball researcher to come out of Tate.

Birthday List

There are no nonagenarians celebrating birthdays in June but there are two players who turn 89 a day apart. Bobby Reeves' birthday is June 24 and Ralph Erickson's is the 25th.

Baseball's First Drug Addict?

With all the publicity surrounding the players involved with cocaine these days, one might wonder who was the first major league player with a drug problem. That dubious honor quite likely goes to Thomas Barlow, our *May Mystery of the Month*. Bob Richardson found the following article in the September 16, 1877 *Boston Globe*:

"Mr. Thomas Barlow, of baseball notoriety, tells a strange story of the manner in which he became addicted to the use of morphine. He says: 'It was on the 10th of August, 1874, that there was a match game of baseball in Chicago between the White Stockings of that city and the Hartfords of Hartford, now of Brooklyn. I was catcher of the Hartfords, and Fisher was pitching. He is a lightning pitcher, and very few could catch for him. On that occasion he delivered as wicked a ball as ever left his hands, and it went through my grasp like an express train, striking me with full force in the side. I fell insensible to the ground, but was quickly picked up, placed in a carriage, and driven to my hotel. The doctor who attended me gave me a hypodermic injection of morphine, but I had rather died behind the bat than have had that first dose. My injury was only temporary, but from taking prescriptions of morphine during my illness, the habit grew on me, and I am now powerless in its grasp. My morphine pleasure has cost me eight dollars a day, at least. I was once catcher for the Mutuals, also for the Atlantics, but no one would think it

to look at me now.' He says there is no hope for him, and that he will continue taking the drug until it kills him."

From this, one would assume that he died at a relatively young age. Unfortunately, the article does not mention his whereabouts. He quite likely is from New York or Brooklyn; there were Thomas Barlows in both city directories in 1876 and 1877 but each disappears in 1878. Since the article appeared in the *Boston Globe*, he could have been living in Boston; there is no way to tell, but it wouldn't hurt to check for deaths in both cities.

The Scoreboard

	IN	OUT	PCT
Total Complete Names	13874	71	99.491
Total Complete Births	13148	797	94.285
Total Complete Deaths	6892	482	49.423
Total Assumed Alive	6571		47.121
Total Bats	12539	1303	90.587
Total Throws	12811	1031	92.552
Total Heights	12715	1127	91.858
Total Weights	12638	1204	91.302
Total Debut Dates	13945	0	100.000
Total Questionnaires	9908	4037	71.051
Total Completion			91.8513

Joseph Lee "Dode" Birmingham

By Cappy Gagnon

B: August 4, 1884, Elmira, New York
D: April 24, 1946, Tampico, Mexico
BRTR 5-10 185

Dode played a key role in one of the most famous games ever played. The 1908 season to this day remains the most exciting two-league race in baseball history. Three teams were locked in a battle for the pennant in each league. On October 1, Addie Joss of the Indians threw a perfect game against the White Sox. Big Ed Walsh did almost as well, yielding only four hits and one walk, but Birmingham was his nemesis.

Dode opened the third with a single to center, stealing second on a pickoff attempt. He continued to third on the throw from first which caromed off his head. He then scored the only run of the game on a passed ball. Birmingham also had another hit and steal. Cleveland was in five no-hitters in the next two years, losing only the one game that Joe missed.

Birmingham was a magnificent defensive centerfielder. Some thought he had the strongest throwing arm in baseball. Writing in the April 1924 issue of Baseball Magazine, J. C. Kofoed created a statistic called "assists per 100 games." Birmingham had the highest rate: 21.8. Nobody was within four assists per game. During a four year period (1907-10), Ty Cobb was the only American League outfielder who had more assists: (95-92).

This arm strength may have had its origins in geography, birth year, and collegiate training. Both Joseph "Dode" Birmingham and John "Red" Murray were born in 1884, grew up in Elmira, New York, and attended Notre Dame in 1906. Murray led the majors with 103 assists from 1907 through 1910. Before Dode enrolled at Notre Dame, he spent a couple of years at Cornell, where he was a schoolmate of Billy Evans, legendary umpire, who also broke into the American League in 1906. Evans lasted for 22 years.

President C. W. "Charley" Somers hired Dode to manage on September 2, 1912. Barely 28, he was one of the youngest big-league pilots ever. A brainy manager, Birmingham has been credited with two innovations in the game. According to Herbert Simons, in an August, 1960 Baseball Digest article, Dode invented the safety squeeze play in 1913. The suicide squeeze had been employed for a few years prior to that time. Franklin Lewis, in The Cleveland Indians, said that Birmingham invented "the intentional trap play that sets up the double play."

He managed parts of four major league seasons (1912-15). Bob Davids has documented that Birmingham holds the record for the best start as a manager after his first 70 games (51-19, .729). Dode later won a minor league pennant with Pittsfield of the Eastern League (1919).

Birmingham and the great Nap Lajoie did not get along. When Nap slumped in 1913, Joe benched him in June. Because of huge financial losses in the Federal League war, Lajoie was waived to Philadelphia in January of 1915. This left the Cleveland Spiders/Bronchos/Molly Maguires/Naps in need of a new nickname. Fans were reminded of the excitement that Lou Sockalexis had brought to Cleveland 18 years earlier, so the name Indians was adopted. As one Notre Dame man left, the name of another Notre Dame man was applied to the team and is still in place seven decades later.

The end of Dode's major league career began a labor squabble which received a lot of press attention at the time. After being relieved as a manager, Birmingham reported to manager Lee Fohl at Somers Park each day. Finally, on June 25, 1915, he was released and barred from the clubhouse and grounds. He claimed he had an "ironclad contract which does not expire until the end of the 1916 season." Public sentiment, which had supported the owners against the players who broke contracts to go to the Federal League, was in favor of Birmingham in his contract suit. Dode offered to negotiate a settlement with Somers because of the team's weak financial position.

Dode worked as a scout for many years. According to his obituary which appeared in The Sporting News, Birmingham quit as a scout with the Indians when they refused to sign Bill Hallahan, who went on to star with the Cardinals.

Writing in The Imperfect Diamond, Lee Lowenfish and Tony Lupien reported that it was Birmingham, scouting in New York City in 1944, who convinced Danny Gardella to return to baseball from his wartime job in a shipyard. Gardella played two years with the Giants, but in February of 1946, he jumped to the outlaw Mexican League, proclaimed by founder Jorge Pasquel as the third major league. Ironically, Dode accepted an offer to umpire in the Mexican League. Six months later he passed away there of a heart attack.

1875 Trenwith, George
1923 Wells, Edwin Lee
1898 Wilson, Henry C.
1899 Woodruff, Peter Frank

B: Ireland
D: Montgomery, Alabama
B: Apr 8 1877
B: Jun 1873
New York

(D2)
(C1)
(D2)
(D2)