

Base Ball in Philadelphia: A History of the Early Game, 1831–1900. By JOHN SHIFFERT. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2006. ix, 288 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

On the back cover of John Shiffert's book, *Base Ball in Philadelphia*, baseball historian John Thorn says, "Never has anyone written better on the rise of baseball in the Quaker City." This statement best summarizes the expectations and disappointments of this text. The history of the national pastime is closely linked with the game's evolution and success in Philadelphia, and until Shiffert's work no one had fully explored this theme. Though the author is to be commended for his effort, the book falls short of fulfilling its promise. *Base Ball in Philadelphia* has significant omissions, some factual errors, and an inappropriate time line.

Although Shiffert's intent was to write a history of nineteenth-century baseball in Philadelphia, the founding of the American League's Athletics, the break-up of the 1901 Phillies, or the opening of Shibe Park in 1909 would have been more fitting termination points than 1900. A reader also must be alerted to the fact that one-third of the book is comprised of biographical summaries of nineteenth-century Philadelphia baseball figures, much of which is available in other sources.

Although Shiffert does an admirable job of telling us about the American Association, the Centennials, and the city's formative antebellum ball clubs, he falls short of giving his readers a full panoramic vista. He omits discussion of the impact and legacy of cricket on local bat-and-ball sports. He gives minimal attention to the west Schuylkill River and Camden ball-playing sites, the rivalry between the Wharton Grounds in South Philadelphia and the North Philadelphia ball fields, the Hayworth-Fitzgerald professionalism controversy, the frictions over Gloucester City baseball, and the quarrels splintering the Players League Quakers. He also undervalues the impact of the state's blue laws and misplaces some of Philadelphia's old ballparks, particularly the ball field at Camac Woods.

Shiffert focuses too heavily on individual players and personalities and too little on actual situations that affected the character and nature of the local game. His coverage of Octavius Catto and the Pythians, for example, ignores the politics of their baseball schedule and the civil rights machinations that led to Catto's assassination. Visually, the work could have benefited from the inclusion of pictures or woodcuts of the ballparks and their neighborhoods, as well as team portraits. Maps of the North Philadelphia baseball corridor also would have been beneficial to readers unfamiliar with the late nineteenth-century "walking city."

Textually, the book is disserved by the author's use of modern idiomatic expressions, such as "yuppies" and "wunderkind," for nineteenth-century personages and by repetitious descriptions. The narrative also would have benefited from better editorial scrutiny, which would have eliminated exhaustive quotes

and an overabundance of textual citations. Shiffert does not properly cite journal articles in the bibliography, often noting the periodical and not the specific article. He also fails to consult recently published works on nineteenth-century Philadelphia baseball.

The publisher must bear some of the responsibility for the book's final format, especially the problem of pages coming out of the binding. Otherwise, John Shiffert's intent is noteworthy and should be applauded. Yet, the full story of Philadelphia baseball still awaits the coverage it deserves.

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Pittsburgh in Stages: Two Hundred Years of Theater. By LYNNE CONNER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007. xix, 278 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$32.)

Lynne Conner has carefully culled materials from the Curtis Theatre Collection (University of Pittsburgh), the Archives of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, archived newspapers, and national and local publications to write a social history of Pittsburgh's theatrical activity from 1790 to 1989.

Acknowledging roots of earlier theatrical activity at Fort Pitt and sources of more recent developments, Conner provides a well-documented chronology accompanied by 51 black-and-white illustrations. The first illustration, a downtown map locating historic theater structures, is worth bookmarking for reference while navigating the book's eight chapters. Familiarity with Pittsburgh geography and iconography makes reading more fun, but less familiar readers will still find pleasure in anecdotes of a young Andrew Carnegie in the gallery of the Pittsburgh Theater and of appearances of Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, James O'Neill, Eleonora Duse, August Wilson, and many other figures of national note.

But more cogently, theatrical activity in the "smoky city," with its geographic and industrial stature, paralleled activity in much of the rest of the country. Nevertheless, it developed a stamp of its own—call it "Pittsburghian." From gruffer (spilling beer on the floor of Vierheller's Concert Garden) to finer perceptions of the city (the innovative design of the Nixon Theatre, or the sell-out audiences attending Wilson's work at Pittsburgh Public Theater), the text blends political, industrial, and social events. It attempts to demonstrate a greater symbiotic, as opposed to casual, relationship; culture, business magnates, workers, artists, and buildings thrive or decline interdependently. Throughout, the author's love of theater's role in society is evident.

Covering professional, college, and community theater, Conner's scope is large. Her job is sometimes easier because of confluence; Carnegie Mellon