

*Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball.* By NORMAN L. MACHT. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xviii, 724 pp. Illustrations, sources, index. \$39.95.)

*Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball*, by Norman Macht, is the end result of a twenty-two-year project. Anytime a question arose about Mack or his teams, the response was “check with Norman.” It was hoped that the biography of the extraordinary Connie Mack would not outlast its author. This seven-hundred-page text is just the prelude to Mack’s amazing relationship with baseball and his beloved Philadelphia Athletics. Another forty years have yet to be chronicled.

It was once suggested that writing Mack’s biography was impossible. Many feared that when the Athletics moved to Kansas City in 1954, Mack’s papers and records were loaded onto a moving van and taken to the local dump. No one, with the exception of Norman Macht, can say for sure whether this anecdote is accurate. Documenting such stories, however, is the only significant disappointment with Macht’s masterful study.

According to the author, he researched the book with “accumulated scraps of notes jotted down on ticket stubs, paper napkins and hotel laundry lists.” Macht confessed that he could not “tell you when or where . . . [he] picked them up . . . [any more than he] can tell you the kinds of trees that gave lives to the paper they were printed on.” It’s most unfortunate to have such an important biography and not have any idea where the information came from. The author belittles academic “note-takers” and confesses, “I cannot cite date, page and column whence cometh all the raw material of this book. Nor do I think most readers care” (673). Regrettably, all serious researchers are interested in knowing where the author got his information. A university press should appreciate this requirement. Apparently, the publisher sacrificed a bibliography and footnotes for entertaining background pages. As a result, anyone working on Mack’s Athletics must use Macht’s book, minus his “scraps of notes,” solely as a secondary source.

The reader gets a whole new perspective of Mack’s early life in East Brookfield, Massachusetts, particularly his family ties and his relationship with his mother. We learn how the young Mack began his career as a catcher for local teams and moved on to become a field-manager-in-training. Although Mack’s playing days were undistinguished, the author follows his rise to the American League Athletics in Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Washington, and Milwaukee. But Mack was a complex man. He was not just the aloof “tall tactician” waving his scorecard on the players’ bench. Connie Mack had to learn patience and to control his fiery temper. He needed to understand his players and restrain his outbursts and fussing. According to Macht, Connie Mack became a master psychologist and overseer of temperamental and unfocused ballplayers. His relationship with the man-child Rube Waddell makes for fun reading. Mack also wanted his players to

think and work together. Contrary to his later image, Mack was an avid sign stealer and conniving advantage seeker as a player and manager. At times he could be an inspiring orator and manipulating publicist. Macht related that Mack's credo revolved around teamwork. "Think. Create. Experiment. And stay in shape." He told his players that they owed this dedication to themselves, their teammates, and the paying customers. He often advised his teams to "Get plenty of rest, and be prepared mentally and physically to do . . . [your] best every day" (444).

The author focuses on Mack's dominant teams of the 1901–14 era. Macht discusses manager Mack's moves, strategies, and values. Most major transactions and controversies are examined and scrutinized. More knowledgeable readers might want to know more about Mack's relationship with Ben Shibe and the role of Al Reach in the founding of the Athletics. There are also questions about the actual machinations behind the signing of Napoleon Lajoie and the reasons why Ben Shibe did not assume more than 50 percent of the franchise. These kinds of queries are critical for a book of this detail and importance.

This volume is the first installment of Mack's life. It is a must read for all historians of the national pastime, particularly those with an interest in Philadelphia sports. It is just regrettable that this well-written text, as a research source, is plagued by such documentary omissions and limitations.

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*Helen Clay Frick: Bittersweet Heiress.* By MARTHA FRICK SYMINGTON SANGER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. xiv, 391 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.)

It is not often that a member of a privileged family authors a revealing biography of an eminent relative, much less of the wealthiest heiress in America. Martha Frick Symington Sanger's biography of her great aunt, Helen Clay Frick (1888–1984), is a welcome addition to the growing interest in the history of privileged women and of memory and historical preservation. Sanger captures the essence of a life shaped at an early age by devastating family loss and shifting social and political forces. She argues that Frick was "a vividly independent figure in her insistent and successful fight to secure a place for herself, to have her voice heard, in the corporate, professional, museum, and business worlds of money and power" (xiv). Sanger reveals a tale of an art patron, a philanthropist, a natural preservationist, and above all a daughter whose lifelong dedication to her father's legacy set her at odds with Frick trustees, renowned scholars, and institutional administrators.

Frick's luxurious childhood, overshadowed by the deaths of her beloved sister