

buildings are most vulnerable fifty years after construction, when styles change, surfaces weather, and aging systems breakdown. While we may be too close to the last century to judge objectively the buildings from those years, Keels recites a sorry litany of destruction. He begins his discussion of the twentieth century with the Gimbel Brother's Department Store on Market Street (demolished 1979) and moves on to Shibe Park/Connie Mack Stadium (demolished 1976)—both nostalgically remembered by many Philadelphians—and records unforgivable vandalism such as the destruction of Reyburn Plaza to erect the present Municipal Services Building and the tearing down of the Naval Hospital on Pattison Avenue. There is also an amusing section on “unbuilt” Philadelphia that reminds us that City Hall might have been erected around Independence Hall had there not been a public outcry, or that John McArthur's City Hall at the intersection of Broad and Market streets might have been reduced to a tower in the midst of a traffic circle. These are “losses” few will regret.

General readers with an interest in Philadelphia and preservationists alike will be turning to this book for years to come. Also, unlike many books of photographs and postcards that have appeared in recent years, *Forgotten Philadelphia* is well organized and attractively formatted. It is also thoroughly indexed, and the repositories holding the original photographs, prints, and drawings reproduced here are clearly identified—a lesson yet to be learned by many publishers.

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Almost a Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of the 1980 Phillies. By WILLIAM C. KASHATUS. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 392 pp. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

Writing history is not easy. It can actually be easier for the historian to write about subjects one hundred years in the past than it is to write about subjects that the historian has experienced first hand. It's a matter of perspective. It can be difficult for the historian to separate out his or her own prejudices regarding events actually witnessed.

A case in point is Dr. William Kashatus's latest book, *Almost a Dynasty*, a tale of the Philadelphia Phillies from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, with the emphasis on (as subtitled) *The Rise and Fall of the 1980 Phillies*. Kashatus is a historian, the holder of a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, and the author of more than a dozen history books, including four on American history and nine on baseball history. However, even a professional historian can run afoul of history when writing about a subject that is either too recent or too personal. Previously the author of a biography of Mike Schmidt, the pre-eminent star of the 1980 Phillies, Kashatus has dedicated *Almost a Dynasty* to Schmidt (“my

boyhood hero”) and to the memory of the late Tug McGraw (“a sorely missed friend”). And, as he states in his introduction, “The Phils were the only professional sports team I ever lived and died with” (9).

This is not a crime. In fact, this baseball author will admit to pretty much the same emotions about the Philadelphia Phillies, as will millions of other Philadelphians. However, it does not necessarily make for the writing of a good historical account. An interesting, entertaining account, yes. An account that Phillies’ fans will relate to, notably his review of the magical 1980 season, yes. An advocacy book, yes. A good historical account, no.

That’s not to say that Kashatus hasn’t given it his best shot. *Almost a Dynasty* is extensively researched and footnoted and includes insight from numerous interviews Kashatus conducted with the principals involved—be they players, managers, sportswriters, or team executives. However, the result of all this work ends up being more psychoanalysis than baseball analysis. Kashatus went into this project as an advocate—his statement in the introduction about this being a “labor of love” (10) makes that clear—trying to explain why “his” team “only” won a single World Series. Having lived the 1980 Phillies as a fan, and having read and heard all about the team from the media at the time, Kashatus repeats the popular theory that the team, and the organization, ultimately failed due to personal conflicts on the field and front office politics. Without going into a long exposition on these conflicts, it can be noted that *Almost a Dynasty* gives a too-superficial picture of the manifest on-the-field shortcomings of this team and its players, leaving the uninformed reader to speculate that the Phillies would have been wiser to sign a psychiatrist or an organizational consultant instead of Pete Rose.

Given his skills and credentials, Kashatus has the ability to hit a home run, to write a definitive history of the Phillies. Unfortunately, his effort fell short on the warning track. Let that be a warning on the difficulty of writing history after personally experiencing it.

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