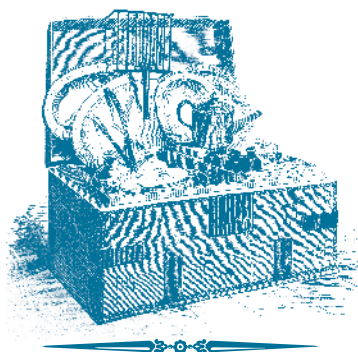


# UP FRONT



## CURATOR'S CORNER

By Emily Ruby, Curator

### Norman Singer

On a warm spring day in Pittsburgh 1935, baseball fans gathered at Forbes Field, excited to witness the Bambino, George Herman “Babe” Ruth, play in one of his last games. The spectators received a special treat when Ruth slammed the final three homers of his career out of the park. One of those balls now resides in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. But there were other baseballs besides Ruth’s three homers that made a big impact that day.

Not very far away from Forbes Field, on a farm near East McKeesport, a young boy lay in bed excitedly clutching two baseballs in a room hung with drawings of his sports heroes. He had the game on the radio and listened intently as his idol Babe Ruth made his historic last homers. A fanatical baseball fan, Norman Singer couldn’t experience the game firsthand because he was bedridden and dying from an injury received playing flag football the year before.

His mother knew what it would mean for him to have a ball signed by his idol, and she managed to get a letter to Ruth requesting an autographed ball for her sick son. Ruth obliged, taking out a ball and signing his name right in the “sweet spot” before he headed out to the field that day. Not only that, Bill Benswanger and Pie Traynor—also some of

Norman’s heroes—had a team-signed ball sent over from the Pirates. Norman was elated. Ever since his tuberculosis diagnosis, the result of a punctured lung from his football injury, Norman had kept himself busy filling scrapbooks with drawings of his idols and sending away for autographs from baseball players, football players, and even entertainers, though baseball was always his first love. He had even begun to write a book on the history of the sport.



An article in the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* shows Norman with his prized possessions.

HHC Collections, gift of Katherine Crider, 2012.86.




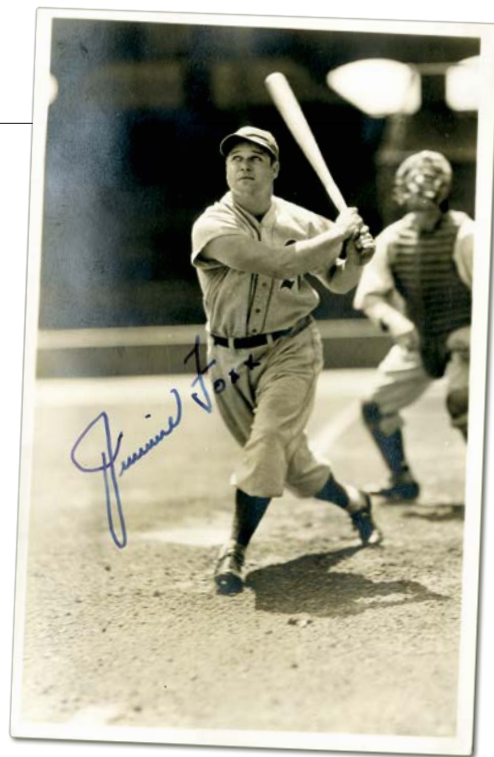
Norman's ball signed by Babe Ruth on the day of his last three home runs, May 25, 1935, is now in the collection of the Heinz History Center.

HHC Collections, gift of Katherine Crider, 2012.86.



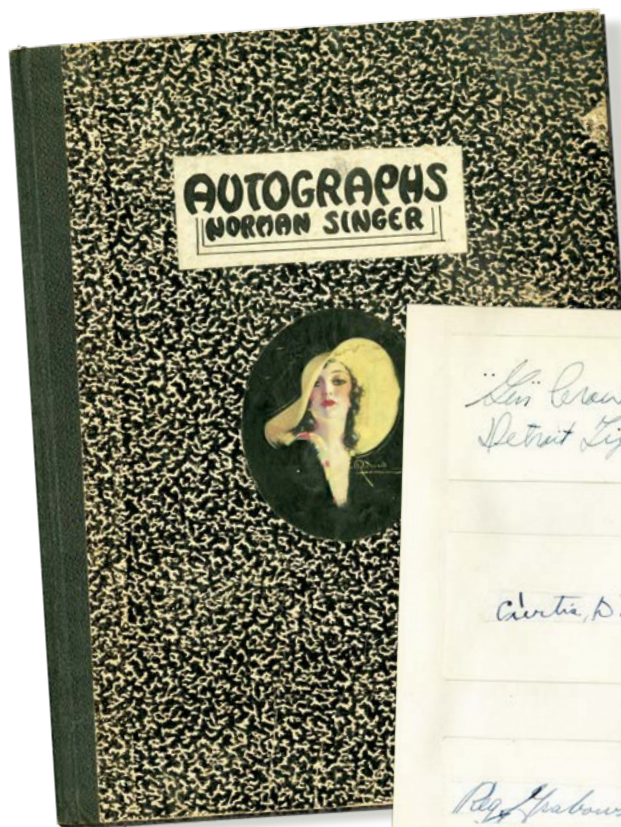
The next year, Norman rallied and was able to attend a game at Forbes Field, but he ultimately succumbed to the disease and died in 1940 at the age of 20. His younger brother Bernard inherited his brother's precious collection of baseball relics and scrapbooks. Bernard and his wife Marguerite were lifelong residents of Western Pennsylvania and touched many people's lives through their commitment to and investment in local education. One such family was the Criders, whose daughter

Katherine was the Singers' godchild. Bernard chose to gift this very special collection to Katherine. We are honored that the Crider's preserved this special story here at the Heinz History Center, where Norman and his love of sports will live on as we share and preserve his story. The gifted collection consists of the two signed baseballs, Norman's autograph book and scrapbooks, as well as various period articles recounting the story of the gifted balls. 



A signed image of Jimmie Fox from Norman Singer's autograph book.

HHC Collections, gift of Katherine Crider, 2012.86.

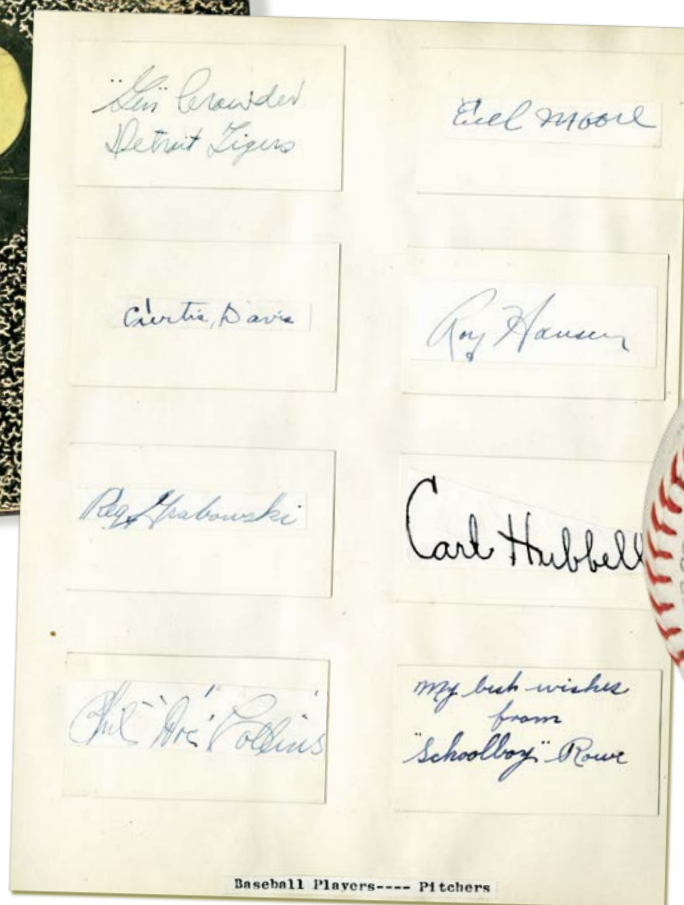


The cover of Norman Singer's autograph book, gifted to the Heinz History Center by Katherine Crider.

HHC Collections, gift of Katherine Crider, 2012.86.

A page from Norman Singer's autograph book, which he organized into sections by sport and position.

HHC Collections, MSS.828.



Norman's ball signed by all of the Pirates team in 1935.

HHC Collections, gift of Katherine Crider, 2012.86.

