



A Museum for Chicago Baseball

by Hal Vickery

Dr. David Fletcher has a dream. He'd like one day to see a museum in Chicago dedicated to the history of baseball in the city. This museum would not only cover the Cubs and White Sox.

In his dream, Dr. Fletcher envisions a museum dedicated to the complete history of the game in Chicago, from its origins to the present. Chicago was an important place in the history of the game. Both major leagues were founded in Chicago. The game of softball had its origins here, too. Those who remember the movie *A League of Their Own* will remember that the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was the idea of a Chicagoan (although William Wrigley's character was fictionalized in the movie). The Negro Leagues began here as a dream of Rube Foster.

Such a rich history deserves to be told, and it deserves a place to tell it, so Dr. Fletcher put together an advisory board of forty-sever prominent Chicagoans. Everyone will recognize at least a few of the names of the board members: Ernie Banks, Minnie Minoso, Billy Pierce, Patricia Brickhouse, Bruce Levine, Hon. William Lipinski, Hon. Dawn Clark Netsch, Hon. Jesse White.

Armed with an impressive array of dignitaries, Dr. Fletcher then applied for and received Federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status for a foundation to fund the building of a baseball shrine.

Once you have the apparatus set up, then you have to find funding. After all, buildings need land, and both the building and land must be paid for. So the next step is to secure a location and fund it. That's the job of Amber Buchanan, the museum's Director of Planning and Development.

"Since the fall, we've focused on building our Museum from the ground up, starting with the business plan, developing our website, solidifying our advisory board members, filing all required legal documents to maintain our 501(c)(3) status and establishing our board of directors," Buchanan said. "We're currently working on a plan to approach corporate donors and solicit available grants, etc. so we can secure a location and eventually obtain memorabilia from the numerous individuals that have emailed us offering their collections."

As a result, you probably haven't heard much about the museum yet in the local media. I know its existence was news to me when I happened to come across their booth at SoxFest. That's because, according to Buchanan, "I'm not overly concerned with media just yet, only because we've yet to secure a location and I'm focused on funding for the project."

Still, the word needs to get out to the general public, so this year the museum did have booths at both the Cubs Convention and SoxFest. In addition, the museum staff regularly fields questions from members of the local media.

So what's next? Buchanan says, "Our future plans include meeting with the City of Chicago and Major League Baseball to solicit their support and to further our capital campaign by hosting a fundraiser in the summer."

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For the moment the museum consists of a web site. At present the site includes a message from Dr. Fletcher explaining his hopes for the museum. Another page discusses the types of collections the museum wishes to exhibit. This page also contains links to the names of the people on the advisory board and to information on the museum foundation.

A third page included thumbnails of architectural drawings of the proposed museums exterior and interior and an example of the types of interactive features that might be part of the exhibits. There is also a news and events page featuring articles about Dr. Fletcher and the museum. There is even a museum store online with apparel and books about Chicago baseball for sale. You can even learn how to help financially support the project by becoming a member.

You can visit the museum web site at www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org.

Editor's Note: Hal Vickery has been a White Sox fan since 1955 when he was five years old. For much of that time he also had a secondary rooting interest in the Cubs, which he has shown the good sense to abandon. When not cheering for or writing about the Sox, Hal teaches chemistry and physics at North Boone High School, in Poplar Grove, IL. Hal commutes there daily from Joliet, where he lives with his wife Lee, and their dog, Buster T. Beagle. Hal's opinions are not necessarily those of North Boone High School, his wife, or Buster T. Beagle. You can write Hal at hvickery@svs.com.

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