

Bethinking of Old Orlean.

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XII

10-23-90

No. 42

"THRILL OF A LIFETIME"



With the professional baseball season reaching its peak this fall it only seems appropriate to look back to when one of baseball's greats came to Albion. It was July 1957 that "Wahoo" Sam Crawford made his visit to Albion on his return to California after having been inaugurated into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. Between Carl W. Fisher and my father, Cary H. Lattin, they got him to attend a Midget League banquet held at the Strickland Post VFW Hall on Tuesday, July 30. The photo here shows Sam Crawford signing autographs for the little leaguers. At far left is Stuart Page who was elected most valuable player for the Elks that season, Crawford, Don Monacelli and Hamilton (Chip) Doherty Jr. Mr. Crawford presented the Midget League trophies that evening to the various boys.

How did this all come about? Well, it seems that Sam Crawford was born in Wahoo, Nebraska April 18, 1880 and around 1900 he married Ada Lattin, a cousin of my grandfather Nahum Lattin. Actually 1957 was the second time he stayed in Orleans County as he was here for a family visit in 1902. My father visited Sam and Ada at their Los Angeles home in the winter of 1921. They corresponded for several years afterwards but eventually drifted apart. Ada died in the 1940's and Sam married Mary Carter. When it was announced that he had been elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame my father again started correspondence. In fact, I remember attending the ceremonies in Cooperstown on July 22, 1957. A few days later Sam and Mary came to stay at our home for about five days

as I recall. It was during this interval that attended the local Midget League banquet.

Sam Crawford spent 19 years in the major leagues, from 1899 to 1917 and won fame extra ball hits. He had a total of 2964 hits in the majors. Crawford is the only player to have both major leagues in home runs, having hit 16 for Cincinnati in 1901 and eight for Detroit in 1908. He is still top man for both leagues in triples with a total of 312. He led one league or both for one or more years in doubles and triples as well as in other runs. His home runs total 97. He was at bat 956 times with his best batting record for Detroit in 1911; when he hit .378. However, another outfielder for Detroit named Ty Cobb took top honors that season with .420. Sam Crawford was with the Cincinnati Reds from 1899 to 1903 and then a season with the Detroit Tigers until 1917. He finally retired from active participation in baseball in 1938 after rounding out his diamond career with four years umpiring in the Pacific Coast League. When he started with Cincinnati, he earned \$150 per month which is a far cry from the stars today.

I remember him as a very humble soft-spoken and down-to-earth gentleman. He was not pretentious, arrogant or egotistical. Sam Crawford died in California on June 15, 1968.

The Albion Advertiser noted Crawford's visit on August 1, 1957 by saying, "The people of the community are thankful to Mr. Lattin and to Mr. Fisher for bringing Sam Crawford to Albion and giving the Midget League players "a thrill of a lifetime."