



*Photo by Underwood and Underwood*

**George Burns, star first baseman of the Detroit Tigers**

## A Chapter from Current Baseball History

The National League Anniversary—Building Up the Clubs  
—Federal League Talent—The Sale of the Cleve-  
land Franchise—Trades and Sales

By WM. A. PHELON

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The snows and icy winds of February had no deterrent effect on the progress of the grand old game which boomed along quite as merrily as in mid-summer. The magnates were mainly busy in bolstering up the weak places in their respective clubs, anticipating a close and bitterly contested race in 1916. One more major franchise, unhappy Cleveland, changed hands.

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**E**VENTS of the past month seemed to indicate that, with the Federal League menace removed, with organized ball once more in full control, there was a loosening of the bands that

had held the National and American League together during recent years. There seemed a quite noticeable tendency for the two big circuits to draw apart, act in a reserved, coldly courteous fash-



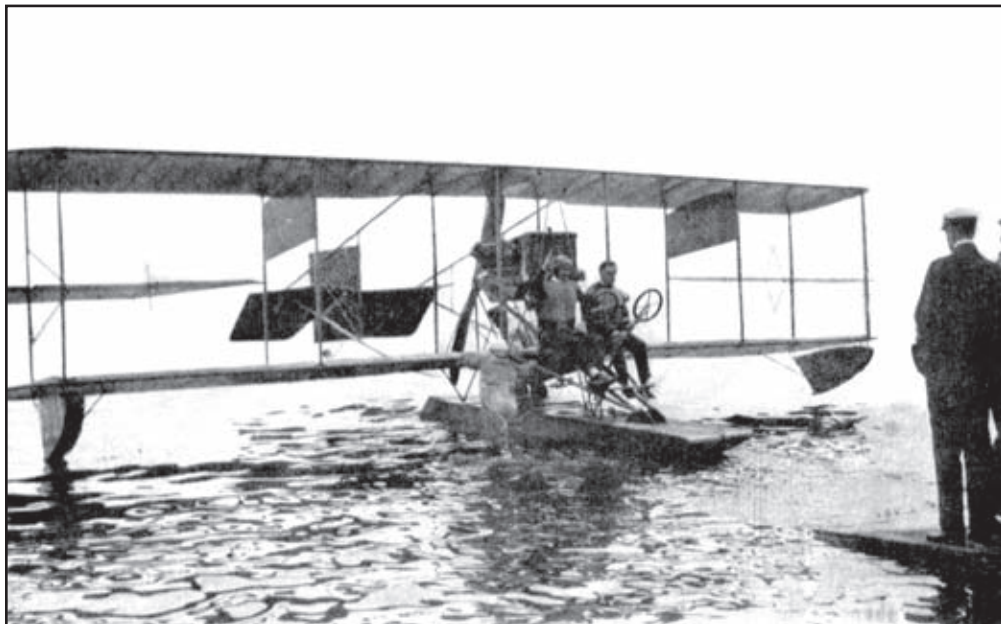
**Ty Cobb at the zenith of his career. A rare and hitherto unpublished photograph of the famous player's flight in an aeroplane**

ion, and, in short, to show that they were extremely independent organizations. There was, of course, the annual guff about the American League's being dissatisfied with the makeup of the National Commission, and tired of a governing body that had two National Leaguers on its membership. That stuff is sprang each and every winter, but this time the squawk was louder than usual, and Ban Johnson was quoted by several newspapers as expressing marked objections to the governing conditions. This much may be noted, too: The two leagues no longer hold their meetings in the same city and at the same time, and the schedule meetings of the two outfits were pulled a week apart, the National League convening in New York, the American League meeting subsequently—nominally in New York also, but actually after everything had been cut and dried in Chicago. Ban Johnson, too, be it noted, sulked in his tent and didn't attend the great dinner given in New York in honor of the National League's fortieth birthday. All of these things seem to show that the two major leagues have reached the parting of the ways; that they won't start any trouble with each other, but that henceforward they will treat each

other with cold reserve, excepting at world's series time.

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The National League teams put in some industrious days during February in bolstering up their clubs, mostly through the addition of Federal Leaguers where it seemed as if the warriors of the Vanished Cause would be most valuable. Not many minor leaguers will be called up into the National this season, excepting those who were added late in the last campaign. The chief reinforcements seem to be Federals, most of the really valuable Federal players finding refuge in the older league, and each club strove to add solidity at some special point. Last fall, it will be remembered, the eight National League clubs came down the stretch so closely that one blanket would have covered them almost to the very last. Every club of the eight, to this day, imagines that it would have won the 1915 pennant had it been able, in time, to mend some one or two weak places in its lineup. Every club, in selecting its Federal Leaguers, tried to patch up these weaknesses, and, to an unprejudiced observer, it looks as if nearly everybody had succeeded—meaning another terrific struggle for 1916, with all of the



**Ty Cobb seated for a moment at the steering gear of an aeroplane just before he made his sensational ascension at Pensacola, Florida**

clubs racing together from April to October.

Although certain clubs of the American League certainly needed patching, needed it much worse than any of the National teams, six of the eight Johnsonian gangs preferred either to go along with the same forces they carried last season, or to rely on bush league talent for bolstering shaky spots. St. Louis, of course, is an amalgamated club, and the coolly independent owners of the New York Americans, who knuckle down to no one, went out for Federal talent without the slightest hesitation. The rest of the American League clubs, though, seemed to establish a quiet barrier against Federal League accessions. Perhaps they didn't need any such assistance—and perhaps, toward midsummer, they'll wish they'd done as the National League crowd did. Then again, it is quite possible that they couldn't do much more than they did; the National Leaguers got the best of the Federal talent early, and there wasn't enough left to get around.

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Talk of big sales, transfers of clubs, etc., continued to agitate the baseball world. Harry Sinclair, the Tulsa man

who was expected to make things fairly spin, and whom 97 per cent. of fans and critics expected to see enter the arena as a big league owner, seems to have temporarily taken himself out of it. Mr. Sinclair, who was, for a little while, a highly picturesque figure of the game, flashed across the horizon, showed himself a game sportsman, and then, just when we all looked for him to keep things stirring, disappeared. There have been few such sportsmen in the public eye. When a fellow will chuck himself and his money into a big, losing business proposition, see that proposition explode, and then, instead of kicking the tar out of his temporary associates, turn in and assume a lot of their debts and liabilities, that boy's some nifty citizen. That child deserves credit and ought to get in among the right people.

That was just what the game Sinclair did. Many a rich man, under the circumstances, would have said: "You guys roped me into this way late in the game. If I'd been one of your original charter members, I'd have considered it fair and proper to get stung with the rest. As it is, after the way you hauled me into this thing in the twilight and the gloaming, when your show was nearly over and the



**A new phase of the skating obsession which seems to have seized upon the nation. Ice baseball as seen at the St. Nicholas rink, New York**

baggage-men were already beginning to pull down the canvas, I ought to tell you to go plum to perdition and stand your own expenses." But Sinclair stuck; he not only stuck, but he took the helm of the sinking ship, steered it along, assumed a heap of liabilities and established himself as a North American pip-pin.

So much for Mr. Sinclair. With him out of the market, the big deals in which he had been expected to figure didn't come through, but there was great clamor about sales and transfers of clubs just the same. All the details of the transfer of the Gaffney interests in the Boston Braves were formally completed. There was some talk of a syndicate's buying out the Brooklyns, but nothing eventuated. In Chicago, after Mr. Weeghman had completed the exchange of cash for the interests of Mr. Taft, there were little surprises every day, when name after name was printed, showing that numerous prominent Chicagoans were interested with Mr. Weeghman in his big venture. In Philadelphia there was a big story afloat for several days announcing that Charles P. Taft had sold his last interests in the National League team—a story that was either a rich fake, or else

convincing proof that it takes three years for Philadelphia newspapers to hear about news happenings. The story, as detailed in the Philadelphia sheets and sent broadcast around the nation, was complete and interesting—but both Mr. Taft and President Baker, of the Phils, the next day, derisively remarked that the tale was true—only that every last bit of it had occurred three years ago! The whole transaction, as played up in the Philadelphia papers, was three years old; the world had wagged along through three of its most tumultuous and exciting seasons—and now, at this subsequential period, the Philadelphia journals had just found it out!

Talk was revived of a sale at St. Louis, and was even carried so far as to announce that the new owners would abandon Robinson Field and would alternate with the Browns on the American League arena. Nothing, apparently, to the narration.

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In the American League, the Cleveland club finally found angels to purchase it. Two high-class Chicago contractors named Dunn and McCarthy were named as the leaders of a syndicate which had bought the Cleveland outfit. All well

and good, for that unhappy ball club surely needed some backing. Strange, though, and hardly creditable to Cleveland sportsmen, that Cleveland people couldn't be found ready and willing to finance the club.

More talk of President Lannin selling the Red Sox floated here and there—another case, presumably, of nothing doing. More rumors may bob up ere spring-time, for this has surely been a season of strange changes and weird happenings in baseball.

The various National League teams have certainly worked hard to mend their fences and patch up their defenses. During the month, the Boston Braves, already materially boosted by the apparent certainty that Bill James could come back, and by the purchase of a formidable coast leaguer named Wilhoit — an outfielder and good batsman — made a tenstrike by landing Eddie Konetchy to play first base. The announced retirement of Schmidt, then, must be on the level—at least, it is so accepted by George Stallings and by the new owners of the club. The Braves, with James back, already possessed a tremendous pitching staff, with the development of young Nehf into a shutout southpaw, Pat Ragon apparently better than ever, and Barnes seemingly an able aid to Rudolph and Tyler. But, to make assurance doubly sure, Haughton has purchased Allen, a clever left-hander, and Knetzer, a well-seasoned right-hander, from the Federals, and the Braves now boast a pitching staff of almost incomparable power. The hunt for a third baseman good enough to replace J. Carlisle Smith has as yet developed nothing startling, although a Tufts collegian named



*Photo by International Film Service*

**Where umpire, battery and batter stand on slippery places**

Lee is to have a chance to practice on the Southern tour. Boston still needs an extra catcher—otherwise the Braves are fully completed for the season, if we take it for granted that Smith will chirk up a little.

Brooklyn is having a little trouble bringing Jimmy Johnston, the fleet-footed Southerner, into line. Johnston, who ought to be a great help to Brooklyn, especially in baserunning, if ever given a fair show, has had two or three big league trials, but none of them really amounting to much as a criterion of his skill. He jumped to the Federals late in the winter, and is now fighting with Charlie Ebbets over the proper salary. Ebbets seems to figure that as Johnston never actually got into service with the

Feds, his Federal contract should not be upheld; the Players' Fraternity takes the stand that this contract is as binding as any of the others, and there they stick. Brooklyn also acquired Chief Meyers, taking him from New York despite the general fear that the Chief is fading, and the fact that he draws a gigantic salary. Otherwise, barring the addition of a few minor leaguers, Brooklyn seems to be standing pat. The material is there, all right—has been there for two years—but how can it be started going?

Jubilations and banquets have been the order of the day in Chicago, and there hasn't been any hunting for players since the addition of Yerkes and Seaton to the Tinker team. Why should there be? The club is topheavy with A-1 men now, and is trying to pick a few of them to give or sell deserving friends. Nobody in Chicago can see anything but a pennant, but there are flaws in the amalgamated lineup just the same, and it's a long ways to October.

Garry Herrmann has been the biggest purchaser of Federals—not in expense, perhaps, but in the number of men secured. No less than six of the Vanished League's people have found refuge under the Red banner—Catcher Huhn, a promising young giant who is to be the Reds' third maskman and will also play first any time Mollwitz is crippled; Moseley, a clever right-hander; Schultz, who, barring wildness, is considered one of the best left-handers that the Gilmore circuit possessed; Jimmy Esmond, a Red in bygone years and a capable infielder; Billy Loudon, a thoroughly seasoned veteran who can play any infield place, bat hard, and travel on the bases, and George Anderson, an outfielder who is touted as much better than his batting average. The Cincinnati club, at the end of February, looked as if it had become an extremely formidable aggregation, and as if the old jokes about the Reds and their sure berth in the cellar would have to give way to apprehensive squeaks on the part of at least four other teams.

The Giants disposed of Chief Meyers, and may do some more pruning in the next few days. McGraw is firm in the belief that several of his veterans, who had off-seasons last year, will execute

splendid come-backs in 1916, and that these men, plus the four Federal Leaguers he has acquired—Kauff, Rousch, Anderson and Rariden—will be amply sufficient to boost the Giants back to their former glory. It looks as if the kid recruits of the Giants would get small show in the training camp, and yet two or three of them—especially Ralph Sharman, the leading batter of the Ohio State League—are said to be far above the average.

Pat Moran has released the veteran Beals Becker unconditionally, and will probably send Tinoup and Baumgartner to the minors. Gedeon and Dave Shean, one of the few men coming up from the A A company, will give Niehoff a battle for possession of second base. Gedeon is said to have developed into a real junior wonder, and Shean ought never to have been let out of the big leagues. The Quaker leader surprised the fans somewhat by taking on Josh Devore, who roamed from club to club in the National league for several seasons, and Wilbur Good, a pretty classy batsman, who will probably show better than one or two of the men Tinker retained. Chief Bender, the good old Injun, has caught on with the Phils. The condition of Killefer's shoulder is still alarming, and with this masker out of it the Phils are out of it, too. Oh yes—the Cubs also handed over Pitcher Karl Adams to the Phils. Adams is only a tall kid, but has been enlisted under the banners of three major league teams in his short career.

Although Barney Dreyfuss derided his fellow-magnates for taking Federal Leaguers into their camps, he fell for a couple of them himself: Smith, an infielder whose record does not look at all startling, and Moran, a very promising left-handed pitcher. Moran was badly needed, and ought to win a berth in short order. Late in February, Jimmy Callahan made a ten-strike by getting Arthur Wilson from Joe Tinker. Wilson and Gibson, if Gibby can still stand the pace, will compose a splendid catching duo. Several young Pirates got the axe during the month, among them Catcher Murphy, who was a batting failure last season, and Shortstop Gerber, who was

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highly touted before he joined the Pirates, but was feeble with the stick.

Miller Huggins, at St. Louis, stands pat against Federal players, and will present a team made up largely of Class AA athletes, from St. Paul and from the coast, while Jack Warhop, late of the New York Americans, will also have a tryout on the pitching staff. The club, as Hug outlined it in February, was problematical: Likely to do quite fairly if its AA men hold out, and to fall heavily if they don't—also if Hug himself persists in staying out of the game.

AMERICAN LEAGUE.

Connie Mack announced early in February that Malone would probably play second—then stated, late in the month, that Napoleon Lajoie would remain on the middle station. Davies, who had just won a regular berth, announced his retirement from baseball only a few days after Oldring sent word that he'd come back and play the game instead of farming. Connie finally sold Frank Baker—exact price unknown—and is still collecting collegians. Two or three of his minor league pitchers look pretty sweet, but, on March 1, it could hardly

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be said that Connie had done much that was calculated to lift the Athletics out of the lower places.

Aside from taking on Pitcher McHale, who was with them some time ago, the Red Sox did little during the month, and seem satisfied to adopt a stand-pat policy. Why shouldn't they?

There was some talk, at Chicago, of trading Joe Jackson for Maisel, but the story was negatived later at both ends of the line. Commy isn't calling to any Feds to come back, and is holding fairly tight to his October list of men, excepting the addition of two staunch veterans, Jack Lapp and George Moriarty. Lapp will doubtless displace one of the younger catchers of the White Sox; Moriarty will get a fair chance to show if he has the old ability. Larry Chappelle is to be recalled and given another chance in the big show, and there may be other minor changes in the Old Roman's team.

Cleveland, as before remarked, has just passed into new owners' hands. It is stated that Lee Fohl will be retained as manager, but no steps, as yet, seem to have been taken towards bracing up the club.

Detroit is going on the principle that the material is all there, and needs only a little spurring to make it win. Possibly the tonic may be administered by Billy Sullivan, the old White Sox catcher, who has joined the Tigers as battery coach, and is expected to speed up both the young pitchers and the maskmen.

Messrs. Huston and Ruppert kept right on hustling during February. It was generally admitted that they made a tremendous hit by landing Lee Magee; a clever play by securing Cullop, and some elegant selections among their minor league recruits. Now come the Duumvirs with a loud crash—the purchase of Frank Baker! With Baker and Magee both in there every day, that team should be immeasurably improved in batting, and is changed from a .450 point factor to a team that should tear off .550 per cent of its games all through the summer.

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The amalgamated team at St. Louis is still nebulous, though Fielder Jones tried to cut away some of the timber during the month by sending a few players to the minors. The material is there for a great club, but must be well chosen. Incidentally, Manager Jones was annoyed during the month by Pitchers Plank and Davenport. The veteran declined a \$4,000 contract and got cold comfort from the National Commission; the kid, it is said, refused an \$8,000 contract in the fall, and now howls woefully at the idea of accepting far less money. Marsans, the famous Cuban, has, it is reported, expressed a yearning desire to return to Cincinnati.

Clark Griffith has shipped little Acorta, the Cuban, to the minors, and says that Judge, the new first baseman, is good enough to displace Gandil on the initial sack. Otherwise, the Washington club hasn't developed much that was sensational during the month and seems contented with its alignment of October.

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OLD-TIME FIRST BASEMEN

ONE great institution of the past that has gone a-glimmering: the old-time first basemen, the gigantic cleanup hitter of the team. Twenty-five years ago the first baseman of a big league ball club was a sort of monument or monolith. There was a shoal of these huge beings; almost every club had one, and they were, in most respects, as much alike as so many parallelograms. They were immense men, well over six feet tall, and weighing round 220 pounds; they usually wore large, fierce, piratical mustaches; they always batted in fourth position, and when they came up the earth trembled under their elephantine tread. Anson, Brouthers, Connor, Orr—such were good samples of the vast first basemen—giants in size, giants at the bat, and double giants in the adulation of the bugs. They were, as a rule, a law unto themselves when it came to playing the game. Tell one of those monoliths to, lay down a bunt? His stern and boding eye would have left you gasping and

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speechless, if it didn't kill you dead! Yet ever and anon, these elephants, grasping the fact that the infield had drawn way back, and that nobody dreamed of such a thing, would lay down a sudden bunt, and thunder down to first with deep guffaws of glee. Mostly, though, they let two strikes go by, and then, when the pitcher grooved the next one, they swung with a tremendous crash. Their hits had a habit of clearing the infield, just too high for anyone to touch and with a downward whizz that kept the outfielders from approaching them, and how the gloveless guardians of that distant day did love (NOT) to see those awful drives come ramming towards them! Occasionally, of course, the elephants missed their swings, revolved like some enormous gyroscope, and then stood fuming and shaking, while the stands rocked with frantic glee. Any time one of those fellows fanned, there was more delight amid the hoi polloi than would ordinarily be started by the strikeout of ten common hitters.

As fielders, these mammoths spilled sundry throws, and it would, of course, have been lese majeste to ask them to scoop wild hurtling heaves. Going up the line for grounders, they covered about as much territory as a cigar-box—and yet, odd to relate, they were sure death on foul flies, traveling long distances and getting them right under the shadow of the stand. Their throwing arms weren't much, and it was no infrequent sight to see a lightning runner dash from first to third while the elephant vainly strove to get the range and make the peg. What they were there for was just one thing: to hit that ball—and how they hit it—oh, HOW they hit it!

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Another ancient institution that has almost gone is the sawed-off shortstop. Even as they imagined, in those days, that first basemen must be huge creatures who could hit like fiends, so they believed that shortstops must be little men, built close to the ground. Men like Maranville were the shortstop class in those

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golden times—there must have been eight or ten no larger than the Rabbit in the National League and American Association 25 years ago. Monte Cross and Fred Ely, lanky, hungry-looking people, really broke up that belief. When Cross and Ely showed that a skinny man could duck low and snap up the rollers, old tradition was exploded, and from that time to this all shapes and sizes of athletes have held the shortstop's role.

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KOSTAL'S PREDICAMENT.

“**I** OFTEN wonder,” says Bert Cunningham, “whatever became of young Kostal, the Louisville pitcher? His big league career, back in the late '90's, wasn't long, but it furnished much joy, and the immortal story is still told about his first ride in a Pullman berth; how, at the instruction of older players, he slept all night with his arm in the little clothes-hammock, making it so cramped he couldn't pitch for a week to come.

“There was one story on Kostal though, that wasn't given out at the time for fear of managerial wrath, and it consequently has missed publication all these many years. John McCloskey was manager at the time, and Mac was some disciplinarian—that's why we never told the story that season. I understand, however, that John is fat now, and can't run as fast as he could formerly, while I have kept in pretty good trim—so I can tell the story and trust to my speed to escape if Mac ever meets me.

“A few nights after Kostal's famous ride in a Pullman, a crowd of us grew rather thirsty. Very hot night, you know; the thirst was quite excusable, but that would make no difference to John McCloskey. He'd have stung us just as quick for a beer on a hot night as for a highball on a cold evening. So we all slipped quietly out of our hotel, and sought a place where such desirable things could be purchased, young Kostal trailing with the crowd. We had one beer, which tasted very good. We had another, which was also excellent. Ah,

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those days, those days, and those beers as well! Just as Beer No. 3 was on its way, the alarm was raised—an outfielder with excellent eyesight had spotted John McCloskey heading through the door!

“The motion was unanimous: like one man, we arose and went away from there. Went away through the back door, of course; down the yard behind the saloon, and over the fence. Everybody got safe away but one man, and that was little Kostal. Fugitives, fleeing into the dim darkness, heard a squeal, a ripping, tearing sound, then cries for help. We couldn’t stop to give any help. We were otherwise engaged. But, glancing back over our shoulders as we ran, we could dimly make out a dark object, apparently suspended from the fence, and also, apparently, the original source of the noise. It was young Kostal; as he went over the fence a very large and protrusive nail had caught him where his pants grew widest, and there he hung, unable to get loose, and rending the summer night with his appeals.

“No, McCloskey didn’t find him. Mac had merely stepped into the saloon for a bottle of pop, and went his way again, without the least suspicion as to the tragedy that had been enacted as the result of his coming. I never knew just how Kostal got off the nail. He reached the hotel a long time after the rest of us, and his pants were just a wreck, only a wreck and nothing more.

“Poor little Kostal! I wonder, many a time, what became of him in the after years.”

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One of the richest things about the modern major leaguer: His childlike and implicit belief in the astuteness of the other side. Ask any player (excepting Cobb, Collins, and one or two more) why they don’t occasionally try certain simple tricks that used to fool the old-timers, and the answer will be: “Aw, they’d be onto that. Sure they would. You couldn’t fool them.” Whereas, if the truth were baldly told, the modern player, trained to let the manager do all the thinking, would be the easiest mark on earth for any trick or dodge.