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1878–1911

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Cover image: Kansas State School for the Deaf baseball teams (1894) and Kansas City Silents (1906). From the archives of the Kansas State School for the Deaf, Olathe, Kansas.

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Deaf Baseball Players in Kansas and Kansas City, 1878–1911

Mark E. Eberle

Edward Dundon (1859–1893) played baseball in 1883 and 1884 for the Columbus Buckeyes of the American Association, a major league at the time. William Hoy (1862–1961) was a major league outfielder from 1888 through 1902 for teams in the National League, Players League, American Association, and American League. Luther Taylor (1875–1958) pitched in the major leagues for the New York Giants (now the San Francisco Giants) from 1900 through 1908, and he played briefly for the Cleveland Bronchos (now the Cleveland Indians) in 1902. Monroe Ingram (1865?–1944) was a black ballplayer, so he was limited to pitching for an integrated minor league team in Emporia, Kansas in 1896 and 1897.

In addition to having professional baseball careers in common, all four men were deaf. Consequently, they were given the same inappropriate nickname—Dummy.* All four men also graduated as valedictorians of their schools. Dundon and Hoy were teammates at the Ohio Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Columbus (now the Ohio School for the Deaf). Taylor and Ingram attended the Kansas Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Olathe (now the Kansas State School for the Deaf). Stories of the professional baseball careers of all four men have already been written.¹ This narrative focuses instead on the lesser-known aspects of the early history of deaf baseball players and teams, with an emphasis on Kansas. The story opens with the experiences of Ingram, Taylor, and other students at the Kansas State School for the Deaf at the end of the nineteenth century, but that is only the beginning.

Early Baseball at the Kansas State School for the Deaf, 1878–1895

The Kansas State School for the Deaf was established in Baldwin City in 1861 and received its first support from the state in 1862. Political debates about where various state institutions should be located led to the relocation of the school to Topeka in 1864–1865 and back to Baldwin City in 1865–1866. Legislation was finally passed that placed the school in Olathe in 1866. After the location was settled, the name of the school underwent changes to remove terms that were viewed as offensive. It was the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb until 1877, when the term “Asylum” was replaced, and the school became the Kansas Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb. Next to go was the term “Dumb” in 1896, when the school adopted the name Kansas School for the Deaf, which was officially changed to the Kansas State School for the Deaf, its current name and the one used here.²

In May 1876, the school published the first issue of its own newspaper, the *Kansas Star*, which provided information of interest to the students, including various aspects of life at

* Deaf baseball players in the major and minor leagues from 1879 to 1919 are listed in the Appendix.

the school. The Kansas State School for the Deaf was a boarding school, and baseball was a popular activity outside the schedule of classes and work, even during the winter. The first mention of a named baseball team was in May 1878, when the Kansas Star Base Ball Club played against “the boys of the town.” As late as November, the *Kansas Star* reported, “Base ball still continues to be the game of all games at this Institution.”³

By February 1879, three clubs had been organized—Kansas Star, White Stockings, and Red Stockings. The *Kansas Star* published the first box score in March 1879, at a time when the newspaper had a baseball editor, identified only as Polk. Early games were often played with picked nines composed of players from Olathe. Games were also played with a team in the city known as the Olathe Orphans, as well as a team of black players. However, the Red Stockings took a break in May because the “boys want very much to go fishing in the woods before they go home, having played baseball on every Saturday for three months.” In their absence from the diamond, one of their players, Edward W. Bowles, began playing for the Orphans.* On May 8, the *Kansas Star* also reported a new team at the school. “Acting on our suggestion in last week’s *Star*, our girls have organized a base ball club.” Then talk of baseball at the school ended, not just for the summer break, but also during the next few school years, as noted by the *Kansas Star* in October 1880. “We would suggest our boys organize a baseball club. Who will be the first to undertake it?”⁴

Baseball returned in the spring of 1884, when an unnamed team from the school and the boys from the city played each other. When they returned in the autumn, the “pupils ... organized a base ball club [in October], and are putting themselves in training to give the town boys a whirl.” A month later, the town team easily won the only game reported, 17–4. This would not do. The following spring, baseball enthusiasts at the school resurrected the name Kansas Stars and obtained new uniforms. In May 1885, the Stars defeated the Olathe nine, 3–1. Black students also began arriving at the school during the 1884–1885 academic year—three boys and three girls by October. One of these students was Monroe Ingram from Coffeyville, Kansas, who was a gifted athlete. In May 1885, he played first base for the school team in a 24–23 loss to the Olathe OKs. He sat out the 1885–1886 school year, but returned the following year.⁵

PICKED NINE.											
NAME.	Pos.	O.	R.								
McIntire, F.	p.	3	2								
Brickle,	l. f.	6	1								
Whitney,	3 b.	3	3								
McIntire, W.	2 b.	2	4								
Joslyn,	c. f.	5	0								
Thomas,	ss	3	3								
Fishback,	1 b.	1	2								
Tappy,	c.	2	2								
Wilson,	r. f.	2	3								
Total, - - - -		27	20								
RED STOCKINGS.											
NAME.	Pos.	O.	R.								
Bowles,	1 b.	1	4								
Maynes,	c. f.	3	3								
Scott,	3 b.	6	0								
Cox,	c.	2	4								
Brown,	p.	4	1								
Casselman,	l. f.	3	1								
Bradley,	ss	3	2								
Baumgart,	r. f.	2	2								
Sullivan,	r. f.	3	2								
Total, - - - -		27	19								
Umpire, Mr. Frantz.—Scorer, D. Potts.											
Time of game, 2 hrs., 45 min.											
INNINGS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	O.	R.
Picked Nine,	7	1	0	3	0	0	2	2	5	—	27 20
Red Stockings,	0	1	3	0	1	8	1	0	5	—	27 19

* E.W. Bowles was the teacher in the school’s print shop and editor of the school newspaper. He was able to play for the school team because eligibility rules for participating in competition with outside teams were not viewed as stringently as today. Bowles was not deaf, and he served as an interpreter for the students when they performed through sign language at public events.

In February 1886, two baseball teams were organized from members of the school's Olympic Athletic Club—the Clippers and the Crescents. Female students were “making the boy’s base ball suits,” but there was concern about completing enough for both teams. Yet, when the championship game came in June, the Clippers and Crescents both paraded in new uniforms. The Clippers’ uniforms had blue stripes on their white pants, with matching blue caps, belts, and stockings. The uniforms for the Crescents were the same style but in red. The two clubs had not played in a month, so it was the event of the season. All of the students were allowed to watch. The grounds were full, and the “windows of the boys’ building were alive with faces.” The Clippers defeated the Crescents, 22–18.⁶ These two teams would be the primary focus of baseball at the school for eight years.

Monroe Ingram returned to school in September 1886. He was admitted to the Olympic Athletic Club and became a member of the Clipper baseball team. A year later, Ingram was captain of the Clippers and vice president of the Olympic Athletic Club. He was also vice president of the Kansas Gallaudet Literary Society.⁷ At the time, grades (scores) for each student were published in the school newspaper, usually weekly, and they indicated that Ingram was talented in academics, as well as sports.

The box score for a game in May 1888 showed Monroe Ingram was the winning pitcher for the Clippers in their victory over the Crescents at the annual Field Day. In the track and field events, Ingram earned the most points and was awarded the “Superintendent’s champion badge,” as well as prizes for each event in which he placed.⁸

Returning from their summer break the following September, two picked nines at the school played a game in which Ingram pitched to catcher William Boulter. The *Kansas Star* reminded its readers that Boulter “was so unfortunate as to have both legs cut off just at the knees, by the [railroad] cars, some years ago.” Nevertheless, he caught the full nine innings, and the battery of Ingram and Boulter led their team to an 18–11 victory. Ingram also pitched for the Clippers, including a whitewash (shutout) of the Crescents, 6–0, in October.⁹

On 10 December 1888, the school’s students were given a half-day holiday. It was the 101st anniversary of the birth of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who established the first school for the deaf in the United States in 1817, what is now the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. The calendar notwithstanding, the boys chose to use their half day “to indulge in their favorite game—base ball.”¹⁰

In the spring of 1889, Monroe Ingram continued as captain of the Clippers. In games with outside teams, a school team was selected from members of the Clippers and

CLIPPERS.		O.	R.								
Peterson c	.....	4	0							
Wm. Sullivan 2. b	.....	3	2							
Vestal r. f.	.....	3	1							
Shaul l. b.	.....	1	2							
Burget c. f.	.....	4	1							
Ingram p.	.....	3	1							
Albright s. s.	.....	3	2							
Elder 3. b.	.....	2	1							
Fooshee l. f.	.....	4	1							
Total	.....	27	11							
CRESCENTS.		O.	R.								
Gibson c.	.....	2	1							
Ellmaker l. b. and p.	.....	5	0							
Hunt s. s. and p.	.....	2	3							
Bowers l. b. and s. s.	.....	4	0							
Hoggatt l. f.	.....	4	0							
Burkhead 2. b.	.....	4	1							
Metcal c. f.	.....	1	2							
D. Sullivan 3. b.	.....	2	2							
Bradish r. f.	.....	3	0							
Total	.....	27	9							
Innings—1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9											
Clippers	..	0	2	6	0	1	0	0	2	0	—11
Crescents	..	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	—9

Crescents. That spring, the combined school team defeated Olathe teams twice. They then traveled to Kansas City to play the Kansas City Blues, reputed to be “the strongest amateur nine in the city.” The school team won, 11–9. The *Kansas City Times* reported, “[T]he silent team from Olathe put up an uncommonly good game.” The newspaper also praised the school’s pitcher, Norman Hunt, who was “less than 18 years of age but has the curve and speed of an old timer.” Charles Gibson caught for Hunt, while Monroe Ingram played first base. The school team also planned to play the Kansas City YMCA team on June 8, but the game was rained out.¹¹ The school team had some excellent talent for their age group.

The big match between the Clippers and Crescents at the annual Field Day in 1889 was played on Decoration Day (Memorial Day). This time, the Crescents, behind the battery of Hunt and Gibson, defeated Ingram’s Clippers in a close contest, 11–10. Points were assigned to players in the ball game and in track and field events that day. As in 1888, Monroe Ingram was the school’s champion athlete. His prize was an “open face Swiss movement watch.” Norman Hunt also received a watch for second place, and Charles Gibson received a “fancy woolen shirt and crush hat” for third place.¹²

When the new school year began in September 1889, the Clippers and Crescents were without Gibson, Hunt, and Ingram. Gibson and Hunt did not return to school in Olathe. In June, Gibson had signed to catch with the Olathe town team for \$50 per month (equivalent to \$1,394 in 2018). Hunt reportedly signed with the YMCA team in Kansas City, and he attended school in Missouri that autumn. Ingram had graduated top of his class, the first black graduate at the school. He played for his hometown team in Coffeyville before starting his new position as a teacher in Fulton at the Missouri School for the Deaf and Dumb (now the Missouri School for the Deaf). The eligibility rules being less rigorous than now, Ingram joined Hunt on the Missouri school’s baseball team, Hunt as pitcher and Ingram as shortstop. Ingram later held teaching positions at schools for the deaf in Georgia and Oklahoma, where the schools were not integrated. During his summer breaks, he played baseball for the town team in Independence, Kansas (near Coffeyville), but he was released when the team joined the Kansas State League because he was black. Ingram then played for the minor league team in Emporia, Kansas in 1896 and 1897, and for other town teams.¹³

Despite the loss of three top players, interest in baseball remained strong at the Kansas State School for the Deaf. The *Kansas Star* reported, “The grass on the base-ball ground is being worn down by the boys['] constant practice.” During the 1889–1890 school year, the Clippers and Crescents continued their friendly rivalry, each winning close games. The weather was so nice on Christmas Day that two picked nines took the opportunity to celebrate with a baseball game. In April 1890, the school’s gardener was tasked with scraping a second baseball diamond to accommodate the growing number of teams. The Crescents claimed the annual championship that spring by winning the game at the annual Field Day, 12–9. The *Kansas Star* also reported that two former pupils, Norman Hunt and Ansel Williams had received offers to play professional baseball in Nebraska and Iowa, respectively. Both had been playing at the Missouri School for the Deaf with Monroe Ingram that year. Among the other games at the Kansas school in 1890 was a contest

between teams of boys from the print shop and the shoe shop. William Boulter pitched for the victorious printers. One of his teammates was 15-year-old Luther Taylor.¹⁴

Luther Taylor was born in Oskaloosa, Kansas on 21 February 1875. He was first mentioned in the *Kansas Star* in 1884. In the column “Our Little Ones,” the *Star* reported, “John Tobin ran. Harry Bell jumped. Luther Taylor threw a ball.” Little did the author of that seemingly trivial fact know how prophetic the statement would be for Taylor.¹⁵

Until 1890, most reports of Taylor in the school newspaper were his scores in classes and the print shop. He was not mentioned in the *Kansas Star* from October 1888 through January 1890, when Monroe Ingram, Norman Hunt, and the others had done so well on the baseball diamond against teams from Olathe and Kansas City. In April 1890, when Taylor appeared in the story about the baseball game between the boys in the print shop and shoe shop, it was the first time he was mentioned on a baseball team at the school. In April 1891, there were additional reports of Taylor on the diamond after he joined the Crescents. “Luther is a clever pitcher, much better than we had any idea of. He throws a very good curve which puzzles the older boys. Our young Athletes are coming to the front and propose to keep the record up.” His skills as a pitcher might have come as a surprise because he played shortstop and third base for the Crescents during the spring of 1891. Like Ingram, Taylor was involved in activities other than baseball, such as the Kansas Gallaudet Literary Society. Yet baseball was becoming his passion, and he continued to play at the school through 1892, including games in November and December.¹⁶

CRESCENTS.				CLIPPERS.					
	R.	O.		R.	O.		R.		
Fuller lf	6	0	Johnson lf	1	4				
Becker 3b	2	2	Young 3b	3	1				
Spurry 2b	0	5	Thomas 2b	2	3				
Taylor ss	2	3	Sprague ss	2	2				
Zorbaugh p	2	2	Peterson p	2	4				
Funk lb	2	2	Jennings lb	2	2				
Hewitt rf	0	5	Lemley rf	0	5				
Baldwin c	1	4	Fooshee c	3	1				
Sterrett cf	1	4	Croxton cf	3	2				
	16	27		18	24				
<hr/>									
Innings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Crescents	1	2	2	0	3	1	4	1	2-16
Clippers	2	3	1	1	4	4	0	3	*-18

In January 1893, the *Kansas Star* reported that Luther Taylor resigned the presidency of the Kansas Gallaudet Literary Society and returned home. Taylor and his parents went to the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) to take up claims, but they returned to Oskaloosa because “of no good soil.” In September 1893, he returned to school and the print shop. He rejoined the Kansas Gallaudet Literary Society and was elected president of the Olympic Athletic Club in January 1894. He also became captain of the Clippers. Then he left school again at the end of March to work on a farm near Concordia, Kansas. Taylor returned to school for a visit in June, just in time to pitch the baseball team to victory over the team from Gardner, Kansas. He planned to return to school that autumn so he could graduate.¹⁷

However, baseball was becoming his priority, and Taylor did not arrive at school until late October because he was playing for Oskaloosa as their “regular pitcher.” He took up baseball when he arrived at school and injured his knee sliding into second base during a game in November. The injury bothered him through the spring, but not enough to stop him from playing. The school team continued to defeat picked nines from Olathe, but the school team was losing interest in these games because the best players from town were no longer playing. As the end of the school year neared, Taylor went to Kansas City to buy



1894 Clipper and Crescent baseball teams of the Olympic Athletic Club at the Kansas State School for the Deaf in Olathe. Luther Taylor, later a pitcher for the New York Giants of the National League, is seated in the third row from the top, fifth from the left. He was captain of the Clippers in 1894. Image from the collection at the Kansas State School for the Deaf, Olathe.

a new suit for graduation. Like Monroe Ingram, Taylor was class valedictorian. After graduating in June 1895, he left to play baseball in Nevada, Missouri and later in Winchester, Kansas, where he played again in 1896. He also had short stints for teams elsewhere in Kansas. One of those teams was the Atchison Corn Carnival Colts, an integrated team with two black players from Kansas—Bert Jones and Bert Wakefield.¹⁸

The Clippers and Crescents had competed as evenly matched teams from 1886 to 1894, but the teams did not play during Taylor’s final year at the school. The annual Field Day baseball game between the teams in June 1894, after Taylor had left for Concordia, was not up to past standards. “The boys had not practiced quite enough, and as a result it was a ‘wild-Indian’ affair, there being a total of 58 runs in three hours, of which the Clippers scored 38, and the Crescents 20. This ball game was the only thing that came any ways near being a failure.” It marked the end of the Clippers and Crescents,¹⁹ although baseball

continued at the school. During their eight years, the two teams organized by the school's Olympic Athletic Club had served to develop the baseball skills of Monroe Ingram, Luther Taylor, and others who would play professionally into the next century. The successes of players on school teams also led to the organization of independent teams composed primarily of deaf players.

Kansas City Silents, 1906–1911

Perhaps the first successful summer team of deaf players was the Ohio Independents, a barnstorming baseball team assembled from former students at the Ohio School for the Deaf in Columbus. One hearing player was added to the team to help protect against cheating by their opponents. In June 1879, the Independents toured the Midwest and Northeast as far as upstate New York. After returning home to recuperate, the team headed back on the road through Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, ending their season in September. In all, the team reportedly earned a record of 44–7, including games with professional teams. The Independents won most of their games against four of the eight teams in the fledgling National League—the Cincinnati Reds (5–1), Cleveland Blues (2–0), Syracuse Stars (3–0), and Troy Trojans (0–1). Adrian “Cap” Anson, captain of the Chicago White Stockings (now the Chicago Cubs), who worked to make the color line in baseball stricter, also refused to play the Ohio Independents. Chicago and the other three clubs that did not play the Independents were the top four teams in the league. Edward Dundon pitched for the Independents, but William Hoy, who had just graduated, was not on the roster. In addition to Dundon, who later played for major league and minor league clubs, other members of the Independents also played professionally.²⁰

Other baseball teams of deaf players were organized during subsequent summers.²¹ Two were connected to Kansas players. In April 1896, George H. Cummings (a deaf pitcher) sought to organize a team of deaf players in Harlan, Iowa, where they would host games when the team was not touring Iowa and Illinois. His list of players reportedly included Luther Taylor and Charles Fooshee, who had both played at the Kansas State School for the Deaf. Among the other names mentioned were Charles Hussey, Hugh Gates, and Charles Appleby. Instead, Cummings joined Hussey on a team composed mostly of hearing players in Kenney, Illinois. Cummings pitched in a few games, and Hussey was the catcher in at least one of those games, what a Decatur newspaper referred to as the “‘Dummy’ battery.” Hussey refloated Cummings’ idea of an independent team of deaf players in December 1896, which he proposed to base in Jacksonville, home of the Illinois School for the Deaf.²²

Instead of Jacksonville, a team composed primarily of deaf players was organized in Kenney in March 1897. Cummings served as manager for “the Kenney deaf mute base ball team, which is known all over Illinois.” Hussey was the team’s captain. The roster was “composed of young men residing in different sections of the country.”* Bloomington,

* The Kenney Deaf Mutes baseball roster in 1897 included George Cummings (manager), Charles Hussey (captain), Charles Appleby, Barnett, Brashear, Hugh Gates, Elmer Howard, Thomas Huff, Maher, Merrick, and Connors. At least two players, Howard and Brashear, were not deaf.

Decatur, and Mount Pulaski all considered hiring the team to represent their cities, but the club remained in Kenney. They reportedly won the majority of their 60 games in central Illinois, though their record has not been fully documented. The team's season ended unexpectedly in August, when Cummings embezzled money from a pair of games at Kenney and Mount Pulaski (more than \$100, equivalent to \$3,012 in 2018). "He had been putting off the players from time to time when they asked for their salaries." After the Mount Pulaski game, the players confronted Cummings, and he gave them "\$2 each and the promise for an early settlement." The team returned to Kenney for the night, but Cummings slipped out of town the next morning. A warrant was issued for his arrest.²³ Although the 1897 season did not end well, the name Kenney Mutes was used a few more years.²⁴

Despite claims made years later, Luther Taylor did not play for the Kenney Deaf Mutes in 1897, although there was speculation that he would join the team. Hugh Gates, a member of the team, stated in 1927 that Taylor did not play for Kenney, and his memory is supported by contemporary newspaper reports from Kansas and Illinois. Taylor played for the Winchester, Kansas town team from May through June 1897, when he jumped his contract to play for the Junction City team in the newly organized Kansas State League.* Taylor left Junction City on August 2, because "his knee has been hurting him." He was actually headed for Illinois, where he pitched during August and September for the team in Lincoln, about 15 miles west of Kenney. Given that the Kenney team disbanded in mid-August, it is possible Taylor made a spot start as pitcher for Kenney in early August on a day Lincoln was not playing, but no contemporary record of this was found. He was certainly not a regular member of the Kenney team. By October 5, Taylor was back in Kansas, telling friends he expected to play in Illinois again in 1898. Instead of Lincoln, however, he pitched for Mattoon, Illinois in 1898. The following spring, Taylor began the season with the Shreveport, Louisiana team in the Southern League before returning to Mattoon.²⁵

Another independent team of deaf players was organized in Kansas City from 1906 through 1911. It was known as the Kansas City Silents, and it had a stronger connection with the Kansas State School for the Deaf. The *Kansas Star* published a note about the team (taken from the *Kansas City Star*) under the headline "Among the Ex-Pupils." Several of the players were alumni of the school, including Charles Arnett. He was one of the original members of the KC Silents, even though he attended school until May 1909. He was selected to be captain of the school baseball team in February 1909, but he dropped out of school that May to help his father on their farm near Louisburg, Kansas (south of Kansas City). He also left the Silents at this time. Other players on the KC Silents had attended

* In addition to Luther Taylor, a player referred to only as "Dummy Sickel" played in the outfield for the Junction City team in the Kansas State League to begin the season. This might have been Henry Sickel, an alumnus of the Kansas State School for the Deaf, where he was a teammate of Monroe Ingram. The minor league team released Sickel in July. In addition to Taylor and Sickel, Ingram played for Emporia's team in the Kansas State League in 1897.



1906 Kansas City Silents baseball team. Back row, left to right—C. Laughlin, T. Laughlin, [Charles A.] Hartman (manager), [Charles] Ramsey, Mr. Jenkins, [Norman] Hunt. Center row—Iba Jobe Ross, Mr. Waters, [Richard] Makepeace [captain], Floyd Buster. Front row—Ed Scheffler, Mr. Cramer. Image from the collection at the Kansas State School for the Deaf, Olathe, donated by Pauline Ross, widow of Iba Jobe Ross.

the Missourui School for the Deaf, including Richard Makepeace, captain of the Silents.²⁶ Names of players on the KC Silents were occasionally published through 1909.*

During the time the KC Silents played, Kansas City had a thriving amateur and semipro baseball scene. Players ranged in age from preteens to adults. There were few notices about the KC Silents in 1906. In July 1907, however, the team embarked on a tour of northeastern and northcentral Kansas and adjacent sections of Nebraska. Several players traveling with the team were picked up just for the tour, while some of the regular members likely

* The roster of the Kansas City Silents baseball team (1906–1909), derived from the *Belleville Telescope*, *Kansas City Star*, *Kansas Star*, and a 1906 team photograph, included Charles Arnett, Floyd Buster, Clemons, Cramer (or Cramner), *Drisdale*, *Gabriel*, Honicon, Norman Hunt, Jenkins, C. Laughlin, T. Laughlin, Loeb, *Macek*, Richard Makepeace, Miller, Joe Modar, F. Patterson, *Pratt*, Charles Ramsey, Iba Jobe Ross, *William Sabin*, Bert Scheffler, Ed Scheffler, the Sprague brothers, Waters, and *Wittiner*. Players in italics were apparently picked up for a 1907 tour through Kansas and Nebraska to replace players unable to travel for extended periods because of their jobs around Kansas City.

remained home because they had full-time jobs. One of the tour players was William E. Sabin from Johnson County in southeastern Nebraska. He attended the Nebraksa School for the Deaf in Omaha. During other summers, Sabin usually played near home for the town teams in Sterling and Tecumseh, but in 1910, he pitched for the Seneca minor league team in the Eastern Kansas League. Some games on the 1907 tour by the KC Silents resulted in close scores, but they also met some talented town teams who easily defeated them.²⁷

In 1908–1911, the Silents seem to have mostly played around Kansas City, where several opponents were available. This would have benefitted the players who held jobs during the week in the Kansas City area. One announcement submitted by the Silents in 1909 advertised for games with any team of players 18 or 19 year old. Among their challengers was the Young Italian Athletic Club. In August 1909, the KC Silents defeated a team referred to as the Missouri Selects or the St. Louis Silents at Swope Park during the Third Triennial Convention of the Missouri State Association of the Deaf. In 1910, however, the number of announcements regarding the team was greatly diminished, and they ended after 1911.²⁸

Two talented alumni of the Kansas State School for the Deaf did not play for the KC Silents. Monroe Ingram was teaching in Oklahoma and had stopped playing baseball. Luther Taylor was pitching professionally, but his major league career was about to end. In 1909, the *Kansas Star* picked up a story from the *Deaf American*, which reported on a cartoon in the *Chicago American* depicting Taylor's release by the New York Giants.

Each player carried a sheet of paper on which was plainly marked the word "release" and the one occupying the most prominent position had this name on his sheet: "D. Taylor." The "D" stood for "dummy."²⁹

The nickname depicted in the cartoon made the news of his release even harder to take for people at his alma mater, as well as the many deaf fans who never met him but followed his success, as they had followed William Hoy a few years earlier. Now Taylor's major league career was over. However, he continued to play minor league baseball through 1915.³⁰

During the offseason, starting in September 1909, Taylor returned to Olathe as the Physical Culture Teacher and Boys' Supervisor at the Kansas State School for the

Every pupil and ex-pupil will fully endorse the following :

"The name of this Institution should once more be changed. Formerly it was officially known as the "Kansas Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb." Afterwards it was changed to the "Kansas Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb;" a very unsatisfactory and unwieldy title. A more expressive and euphonious name would be "Kansas School for the Deaf." In behalf of the deaf of the state, who seriously object to being called "dumb"—three-fourths of whom would talk if they could hear—I urge the legislature to change the name of the Institution."

Kansas Star Editorial. The passage quoted was from the Ninth Biennial Report of the Kansas Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (*Kansas Star*, 10 January 1895).

Deaf, a position he held until 1923. He had previously been the Boys' Supervisor during parts of 1902–1904, when he was not playing baseball. Taylor later took positions at the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs and the Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville. Before he began his career with the New York Giants in 1900, Taylor had taken a position at the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton in 1899. It was where he met his first wife, Della Ramsey, whose brother, Charles, would work at the Kansas State School for the Deaf and play for the KC Silents.³¹ On a trip to California with Della, Luther met another professional deaf ballplayer with a connection to Kansas.

Joseph Laughlin, 1904–1908

Joseph Laughlin played minor league baseball during the first decade of the twentieth century. His primary positions were third base and shortstop, with a few stints in the outfield. Newspapers only occasionally mentioned first names of minor league ballplayers, which can make it difficult to follow players moving from team to team. For example, catcher Joseph Clinton Laughlin played minor league baseball during the same period as the subject of this story. Another minor league player named Laughlin, first name not yet known, played second base for Niagara Falls, New York in 1908. In addition, several Laughlins played third base or shortstop for amateur and semipro teams.³²

Although Laughlin is not an uncommon name, the Joseph Laughlin of this story is somewhat easier to track through his baseball career because he was deaf, which was frequently mentioned in newspapers, even though it had no bearing on his ability to play. His name was also occasionally misspelled as “Dummy McLaughlin,” and the slight change in the last name adds to the challenge of following his career.³³ One newspaper referred to him as the “brown boy,” and another stated, “Laughlin comes from a Spanish family and is a fine sort of person. He plays ball the year around and in the winter goes to southern California and Old Mexico where he works.”³⁴ However, most newspapers stereotyped Laughlin as a “deaf mute Indian.”³⁵

Laughlin's baseball career came during a time when deaf players were universally nicknamed Dummy and American Indians were tagged with the name Chief. In Laughlin's case, newspapers were confronted by a choice between inappropriate nicknames stereotyping his heritage or his inability to hear. The nickname used exclusively for Laughlin was Dummy. Only Indiana's *South Bend Tribune* ridiculed his American Indian heritage, referring to him as “Sitting Bull Laughlin” and “Young-Man-Catching-Balls-Without-a-Spoke.”³⁶

Little is known about Laughlin's life before or after his career in minor league baseball, other than he attended the California Institute for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind in Berkeley (now the California School for the Deaf in Fremont).³⁷ Nevertheless, information about his baseball career from 1904 through 1908 is available in contemporary sources. In addition, a portrait of Laughlin in a team photo from 1906 was published in *Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide* in 1907.³⁸



The first professional baseball season known for Joe Laughlin was 1904. A player named Laughlin was the shortstop for the Brookhaven, Mississippi team in the Delta League (Class D). There was no mention of his first name or his being deaf in the newspaper reports seen, but a reminiscence of that year from an unnamed correspondent in 1919 stated that “Dummy Laughlin, our shortstop,” was one of three victims of a trick play. The catcher for the team from Canton, Mississippi, Con Harlow, trained his pitcher to throw at a stiff, double layer of wire netting on the grandstand about 40 feet behind home plate. Runners on third base would see a pitch sail well over Harlow’s head, and they would sprint toward home. Then the ball would bounce straight back to Harlow, who would tag the runner out. Memories are often faulty, but a player named Laughlin was the shortstop for Brookhaven and Con Harlow was the catcher for Canton,* both at a time when the clubs played each other in August.³⁹

Laughlin began his 1905 and 1906 seasons with the Goldbugs of Webb City, Missouri. The team was a member of the Missouri Valley League (Class C) in 1905 and the Western Association (Class C) in 1906. In the summer of 1905, he also played briefly for the Joplin (Missouri) Miners of the Western Association. While playing for Webb City, newspapers reported that Laughlin was popular with his teammates and fans, a report that would be repeated in other towns where he played. During the winter of 1905–1906, Laughlin returned to California, where he played continued to play baseball.⁴⁰

Despite being under contract with Webb City in 1906, Laughlin played part of the season with the Pittsburg Champions of the Kansas State League (Class D). Initially, he replaced an injured outfielder, but he later moved to shortstop. Laughlin played for the Champs from May through early June, when the team moved to Vinita, Oklahoma.⁴¹

Laughlin was not happy playing for Webb City. Perhaps he was tired of being “loaned” to other teams, essentially held as a backup player for Webb City. Newspapers reported he was unhappy with his salary. Thus, in early July 1906, Laughlin was sold to the Wichita Jobbers, also members of the Western Association. Webb City was asking \$100 for Laughlin (equivalent to \$2,789 in 2018), and Wichita initially balked at the price. However, the team needed help.

The *Wichita Eagle* tried to put the best face on the Jobbers’ plight when it published the league standings on July 13. Laughlin remained with the club through the end of the season, as Wichita rose to a third place finish. When he first joined the Jobbers, Laughlin played shortstop, but he was moved to third base, where he seemed more comfortable.⁴² As described in the

Western Association.			
	Won.	Lost.	Pct.
WICHITA	28	40	.412
Hutchinson	29	40	.420
Oklahoma City	34	33	.507
Joplin	34	31	.523
Topeka	36	32	.529
Springfield	36	32	.529
Leavenworth	37	32	.536
Webb City	37	31	.544

* Con Harlow had varied experiences during the 1904 baseball season. He began as one of the owners and an occasional player for the Natchez Indians of the Cotton States League. In late July, he became an umpire in the Delta League, quitting a few weeks later to catch for Canton. In September, Harlow returned to the Natchez Indians as their catcher. Both the Cotton States League and the Delta League were Class D minor leagues.

Wichita Beacon, with unnecessary stereotypes, Laughlin made an impression from the beginning, as the team played well in a victory over Oklahoma City on July 2.

Perhaps there was just a little of the ginger virus injected yesterday. Who injected it and from which angle it came, may never be determined. Then Laughlin, the dumb Indian who left his tepee to the east [in Webb City], did the circus stunts and gave a general impetus to the desire to win.⁴³

A month later, the *Wichita Eagle* described the lasting popularity of their new infielder.

“Dummy” Laughlin at third base has proved a find. He is always in the game and is always up and ready whenever anything is to be done. The sight of him is an inspiration of itself, and the manner in which he cavorts around the bag is very gratifying to the fans.⁴⁴

According to the widely held view of Laughlin’s talent on the field, he was a good defender but a weak hitter, as noted by the *Leavenworth Times*.

“Dummy” Laughlin, Wichita’s third baseman, is the fastest fielder seen here this season. The “brown boy” gets everything and throws in better form than any third sacker in the brush. The trouble is that Laughlin is a very poor hitter, but he makes up for it in the hits he knocks down.⁴⁵

Statistical summaries for the Western Association in 1906 showed that Laughlin played in 102 games for Webb City and Wichita. In 323 at bats, he was credited with 73 singles, 5 doubles, 1 triple, and 1 homerun, giving him a batting average of .247, although the published average was given as .236. (Team batting averages ranged from .229 to .245, with Wichita taking the top spot.) Defensively, Laughlin played 16 games in the outfield and committed no errors (1.000). On the infield, he played 17 games at shortstop (13 errors; .839) and 68 games at third base (15 errors; .918).⁴⁶

During the 1906–1907 offseason, Laughlin was back in California, but he did not play baseball, opting to rest for the following summer. While in California, he was visited by New York Giants pitcher Luther Taylor. Taylor practiced with Laughlin but had not seen him play, though Taylor was “told that he has a good reputation as a player.” Meanwhile, back in Kansas, the *Wichita Eagle* speculated that although there was not “a more popular player on the team than ‘Dummy’ Laughlin,” there were “a whole lot of other teams in the association who would like to get the Indian, and it is possible that a big cash offer or a good trade would result in his transfer to another team.”⁴⁷

Laughlin was still on Wichita’s roster early in 1907, as the team explored opportunities to trade or sell him. However, in late March, Wichita simply gave Laughlin his release. There was speculation he would sign with a team in New Mexico, apparently because he was reported to be in Las Vegas, New Mexico at the time. However, teams from Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and other cities in the region did not begin competition until mid-April, and Laughlin spent the last half of the month playing third and second bases for the town team in Amarillo, Texas. Amarillo also had an American Indian player, Willie Weller, who played second base, shortstop, and third base, and occasionally pitched. Weller was “the

pet of the bleachers and the darling of the grand stand” in Amarillo. Laughlin was also popular, and after leaving for Kansas at the end of April, the *Amarillo Herald* reported, “Laughlin has many friends in Amarillo who will be pleased to see him do well up there.”⁴⁸

Laughlin returned to the Western Association with the Leavenworth Convicts. As in other cities, newspapers reported his popularity with teammates and fans. Laughlin tried teaching his new teammates sign language, and they practiced in a Topeka hotel while waiting for their first game of the season. “They sat there for half an hour at a time, saying not a word, but every man wiggling his fingers.” In addition, “One of the features of Saturday’s game at the local ball farm [in Topeka] was the coaching of Dummy Laughlin on the third base line.”⁴⁹

While in Leavenworth, Laughlin played shortstop, third base, and occasionally the outfield. The team struggled to win games, and two months into the season, the Convict’s record was a dismal 13–44 (.228). This apparently affected Laughlin’s outlook, and on July 3 came the report that the popular player was “benched indefinitely for indifferent work and placed under fine.”⁵⁰ Laughlin decided to head east.

In mid-July, he played in the outfield and at third base for the Greens of South Bend, Indiana in the Central League (Class B). The Greens were also struggling. Their record on July 20 was 31–46 (.403), last among the eight teams. Three days later, Laughlin was released.⁵¹ His travels to the east continued.

By the end of July, Laughlin was the shortstop for the team in Charleroi, Pennsylvania in the Pennsylvania–Ohio–Maryland League (Class D). “The tricks of Dummy Laughlin made the [Zanesville] Hogan runners look foolish.” He remained with the club into September and was “one of the most popular players on the Charleroi team.” Charleroi placed Laughlin on their reserve list for 1908.⁵²

Instead, Laughlin returned to the center of the country in the spring of 1908, signing with the Tulsa Oilers of the Oklahoma–Kansas League (Class D). Laughlin played third base and shortstop for Tulsa during the latter half of April and early May. Tulsa was in contention for the league title, and they were bolstering their roster with new players. After the game on May 17, one of those new players took over at shortstop, sending “‘Dummy’ to the seat by the water bucket.”⁵³

As he had done the previous year, Laughlin headed east. In late May, he signed with the Butler, Pennsylvania team of the Ohio–Pennsylvania League (Class C). It was another last place club. Their record on May 22 was 0–13, but they won their next game. There was even a suggestion that the league might want “to chip in and give the club a player or two.” Laughlin’s first game with Butler was May 22 at third base. He was listed as McLaughlin in the box score. It was his only game with the club.⁵⁴ It is unknown where Laughlin was from the end of May through the beginning of August. On August 7, he played for the team in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. A brief mention of Laughlin in the local newspaper summed up both his baseball skills and the stereotypes applied to him during his career.⁵⁵

Laughlin, the deaf mute Indian, who blew into town yesterday looking for a job, went to short in place of Yerkes [in the third inning]. His stops were good and his throwing arm above par. In the eighth inning he made an error

on an ugly grounder when he was playing in close with the bases full. It was quite excusable. He did not show any form at the bat, however.⁵⁶

Pottsville released Laughlin three days later.⁵⁷

This is where my documented trail of Joe Laughlin ends, much as it ended in the *Leavenworth Times* in March 1909. “Dummy Laughlin, a 1907 pitcher [in Leavenworth], jumped his contract with Tulsa, Ok., last year and went to Butler, Pa., to play ball, of course. He hasn’t been heard from lately.”⁵⁸ The only Laughlin known to have played minor league baseball from 1909 through 1915 was catcher Joseph Clinton Laughlin back in his home state of Virginia.⁵⁹ Perhaps from this beginning, the rest of the story can someday be written for Joe Laughlin, the deaf ballplayer. His is but one of many waiting to be told.

Table 1.—Baseball teams on which Joseph Laughlin is known to have played.

Date	Team	Minor League (Class)
1904 June–August	Brookhaven	Delta League (D)
1905 May–September	Webb City Goldbugs	Missouri Valley League (C)
July–August	Joplin Miners	Western Association (C)
1906 May–July	Webb City Goldbugs	Western Association (C)
May–June	Pittsburg/Vinita Champions	Kansas State League (D)
July–September	Wichita Jobbers	Western Association (C)
1907 April	Amarillo town team	<i>Independent</i>
May–July	Leavenworth Convicts	Western Association (C)
July	South Bend Greens	Central League (B)
July–September	Charleroi	Pennsylvania–Ohio–Maryland League (D)
1908 April–May	Tulsa Oilers	Oklahoma–Kansas League (D)
May	Butler Sailors	Ohio–Pennsylvania League (C)
May–July	?	
August	Pottsville	Atlantic League (none)

Acknowledgements

I accessed newspapers online through Newspapers.com and Genealogy Bank. Dollar equivalents were estimated with the formula and data provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/community/financial-and-economic-education/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800>). As part of my research, I visited the Museum of Deaf History, Arts and Culture in Olathe, Kansas, whose exhibits were not only enlightening, in general, but also included an exhibit devoted to Luther Taylor. Historical photographs from the Kansas State School for the Deaf have been posted online at <https://www.jocohistory.org/digital/collection/ksd>.

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Chanute (KS) *Tribune*
Charlotte (NC) *Observer*
Chicago (IL) *Inter Ocean*
Chicago (IL) *Tribune*
Coffeyville (KS) *Journal*
Concordia (KS) *Kansan*
Davenport (IA) *Times*
Decatur (IL) *Herald*
Decatur (IL) *Herald Review*
Decatur (IL) *Morning Herald-Despatch*
Decatur (IL) *Republican*
Decatur (IL) *Review*
Frankfort (KS) *Index*
Frankfort (KS) *Review*
Gibson City (IL) *Courier*
Greenleaf (KS) *Sentinel*
Hopewell (NJ) *Herald*
Hutchinson (KS) *Independent*
Independence (KS) *Evening Star*
Iola (KS) *Index*
Jackson (MS) *Evening News*
Johnson County *Democrat* (Olathe, KS)
Junction City (KS) *Union*
Kansas City (KS) *Gazette Globe*
Kansas City (MO) *Journal*
Kansas City (MO) *Star*
Kansas City (MO) *Times*
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McLouth (KS) *Times*
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Appendix—List of deaf baseball players in the major and minor leagues, 1879–1919, derived from Deaf Digest (<http://deafdigest.net/deaf-players-in-professional-baseball/>), Baseball Reference (<https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi>), and newspapers. Players in italics were referred to as “Dummy.”** The list of players is undoubtedly incomplete, as are some of the years in which they played. Players on a Kansas minor league club are noted. AA = American Association. AL = American League. NL = National League. PL = Players League.

Name	Year(s)	Minor League	Major League	Position
Hume Battiste	1914	X		P
<i>Ed Blevins</i>	1906	Kansas		P
Lewis “Pete” Browning ¹	1882–1889		Louisville Eclipse (AA) / Louisville Colonels (AA)	OF
	1890		Cleveland Infants (PL)	OF
	1891		Cincinnati Reds (NL) / Pittsburgh Pirates (NL)	OF
	1892		Cincinnati Reds (NL) / Louisville Colonels (NL)	OF
	1893		Louisville Colonels (NL)	OF
	1894		St. Louis Browns (NL) / Brooklyn Grooms (NL)	OF
	1894, 1896	X		OF
? <i>Burgin</i>	1910	X		P
<i>Frank Burson</i>	1902–1906	X		OF
Henry Cote	1890–1910	X		C
	1894–1895		Louisville Colonels (NL)	C
George Cummings	1893–1895	X		P

<i>Paul Curtis</i>	1901-1906	X			P
<i>William Deegan</i>	1901 1902, 1903, 1907, 1909	X		New York Giants (NL)	P P
<i>Harry Dix</i>	1906-1908	X			P
<i>Edward Dundon</i> ²	1883-1884 1885-1890	X		Columbus Buckeyes (AA)	P P
<i>? Flannigan</i>	1907	X			P/OF
<i>William Funkhauser</i>	1891	X			OF
<i>Patrick Gately</i>	1890	X			P
<i>Will Gatton</i>	1907	X			OF
<i>"Happy" Henry Hale</i>	1901-1903	X			P
<i>Hafford Hetzler</i>	1911-1912	X			2B
<i>Ed Howell</i>	1891	X			P
<i>William Hoy</i> ³	1886-1887, 1900, 1903 1888-1889 1890 1891 1892-1893 1894-1897 1898-1899 1901 1902	X		Washington Nationals (NL) Buffalo Bisons (PL) St. Louis Browns (AA) Washington Senators (NL) Cincinnati Reds (NL) Louisville Colonels (NL) Chicago White Sox (AL) Cincinnati Reds (NL)	OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF OF

<i>Monroe Ingram</i> †	1896–1897	Kansas	P
<i>Ivan Jenkins</i>	1911	X	P
? <i>Jones</i>	1907	X	P
<i>George Kihm</i> †	1895–1911	X	IB
<i>Joseph Laughlin</i>	1904–1908	Kansas	3B/SS/OF
<i>George Leitner</i>	1901, 1906	X	P
	1901		New York Giants (NL) / Philadelphia Athletics (AL)
	1902		Cleveland Bronchos (AL) / Chicago White Sox (AL)
<i>Thomas S. Lynch</i>	1884		Chicago White Stockings (NL)
<i>Herbert Murphy</i>	1912–1924	X	SS/3B
	1914		SS
<i>Frank Nimmo</i>	1910	X	P
<i>Wood Payne</i>	1908–1910	X	P (IF/OF)
<i>Lester Rosson</i>	1901–1905, 1911	X	P
<i>John Ryn</i>	1885, 1887, 1889, 1891–1892	X	OF/IB/C
<i>William Sabin</i>	1910	Kansas	P
<i>William Sawhill</i>	1887–1888	X	C/IB/OF
<i>Henry Sichel</i>	1897	Kansas	OF

<i>Reuben Stephenson</i> ⁵	1892	Philadelphia Phillies (NL)	OF
<i>Luther Taylor</i> ⁶	1893–1898, 1900	X	OF/1B/C/P
	1897, 1899–1900	Kansas	P
	1900–1908	New York Giants (NL)	P
	1909–1915	Kansas	P

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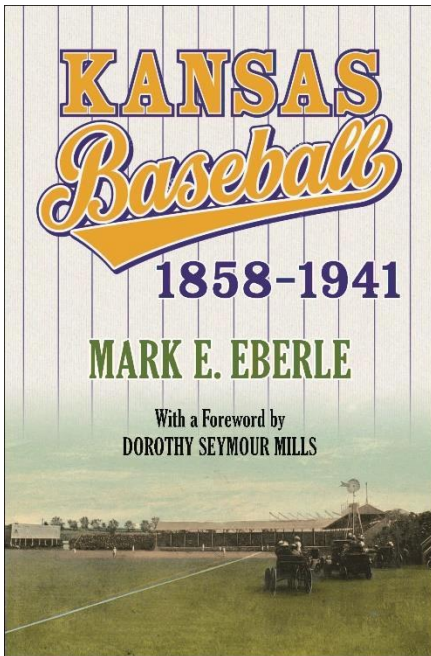
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Additional biographical information for Monroe Ingram.

[†] Eberle, Mark E. 2018. *Bert Wakefield and the End of Integrated Minor League Baseball in Kansas*. https://scholars.fhsu.edu/all_monographs/4/.

* Not all players with the nickname “Dummy” were deaf. George “Dummy” Wells was a Princeton University student and captain of the varsity baseball team. He played in the minor leagues in 1905. Wells was not deaf. He was given the nickname at prep school when he was trying out for the football team and had an encounter with the tackling dummy. “[In] tackling it on one occasion, [Wells] broke the whole fixing down and rolled over with the dummy in his arms. He was then and there dubbed ‘Dummy’ and the title has stuck to him since.” (*Hopewell Herald*, 22 June 1904, p 2).



You can learn more about the early history of baseball played by teams throughout Kansas, in the book *Kansas Baseball, 1858–1941*, published in 2017 by the University Press of Kansas and available in paperback or e-book through bookstores and online retailers.

The book explores the early game played by hundreds of town teams composed of white males, as well as teams of women, African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans. Also described are the regional minor leagues and the major league tours, along with the histories of towns still playing baseball in the state's oldest ballparks constructed between 1924 and 1940.