

Baseball in Deadwood 1876 - 1922



Baseball, the name alone invokes thoughts and memories in both old and young alike. Often referred to as our National Pastime, baseball has roots in every community across America, including Deadwood. The significance of early Deadwood baseball has been largely overlooked when piecing together the history of the city. Yet, newspaper articles printed in the *Black Hills Pioneer*, the *Black Hills Daily Times*, and the *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times* provide colorful descriptions of the men, baseball teams and games played in the northern Black Hills. These articles demonstrate how baseball was more than just a game; it helped build and strengthen a sense of community pride. The following exhibit is an introduction into Deadwood's rich baseball history spanning from the 1870s through the early twentieth century.

Play Ball!



Unidentified baseball game at the Deadwood's Olympic Park, circa 1900.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library

BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

For the 1917 Championship of the Black Hills and a

\$350 PRIZE

To be Held at Amusement Park
Deadwood, S. D.

Sunday SEPT. 9

Morning and Afternoon

This Series of Ball Games is under Management of the City

Schedule---Sunday Morning 10:15 Spearfish vs. Rapid City; Sunday Afternoon 1:15 Lead vs. Deadwood. Stoltz will pitch for Lead and Metz for Deadwood. 3:30 p. m. winner of Spearfish-Rapid Game and winner of Lead-Deadwood game. Robert Muckler of Sturgis and Leo Bertolero of Lead will officiate as umpires

THREE GOOD GAMES

Full page advertisement printed in the September 9, 1917 Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times focusing on the first baseball tournament held at the new Deadwood Amusement Park.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library



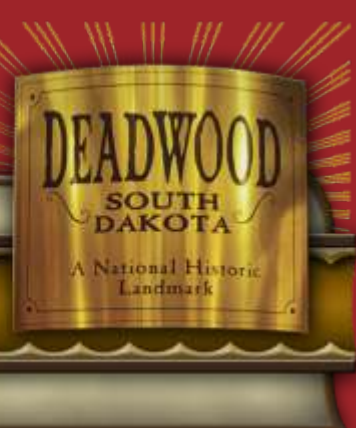
Deadwood Electric Trolley advertising a baseball game between the cities of Deadwood and Lead, circa 1902 to 1915.
Deadwood History, Adams Museum Collection



Unidentified Deadwood baseball team, circa 1890 to 1900.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library



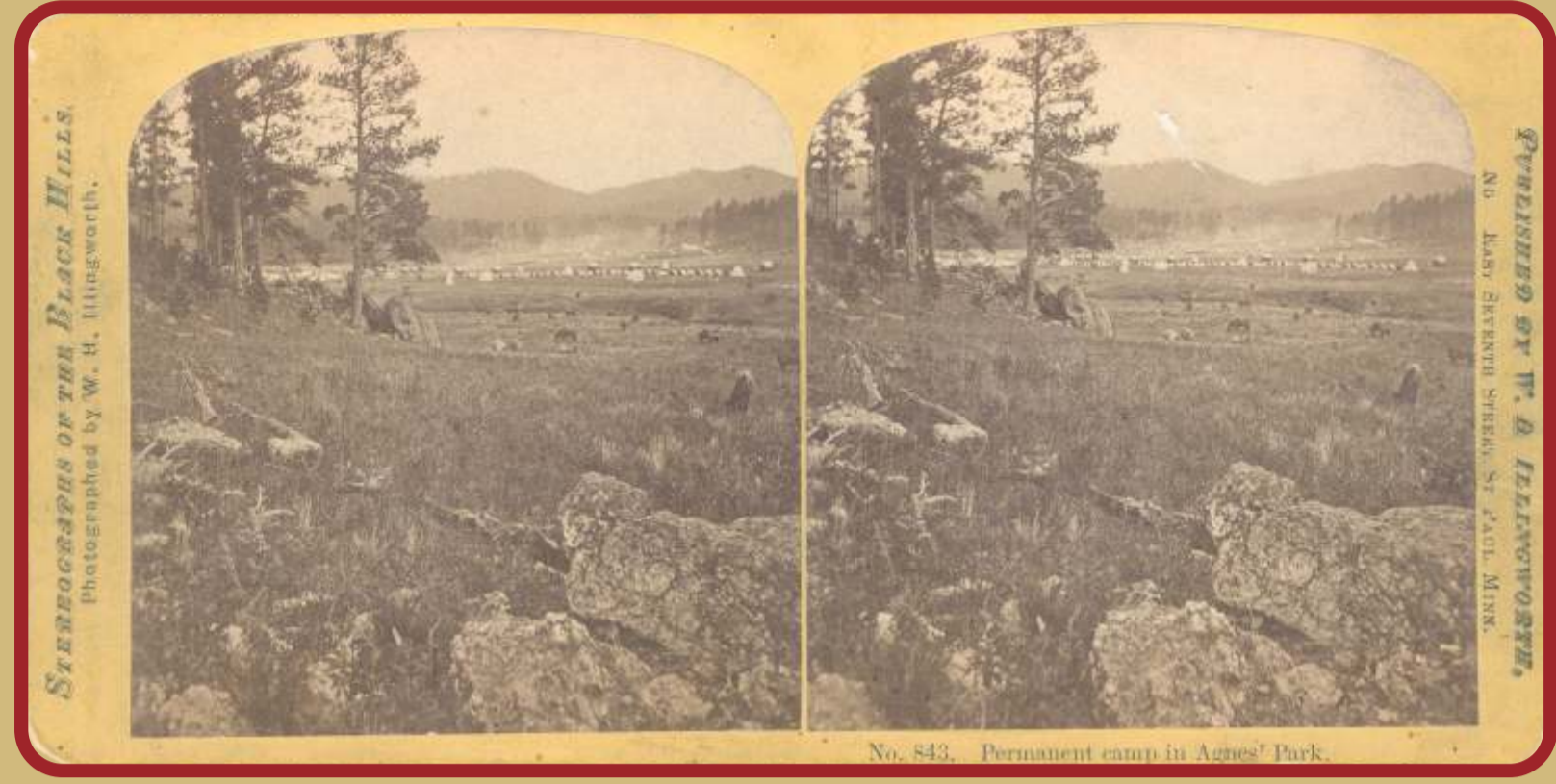
Overview of Deadwood and the Schmitz & Monheim merchant ball team from Lead, South Dakota, circa 1891.
Old Style, Saloon #10 Photographic Collection, Deadwood, South Dakota



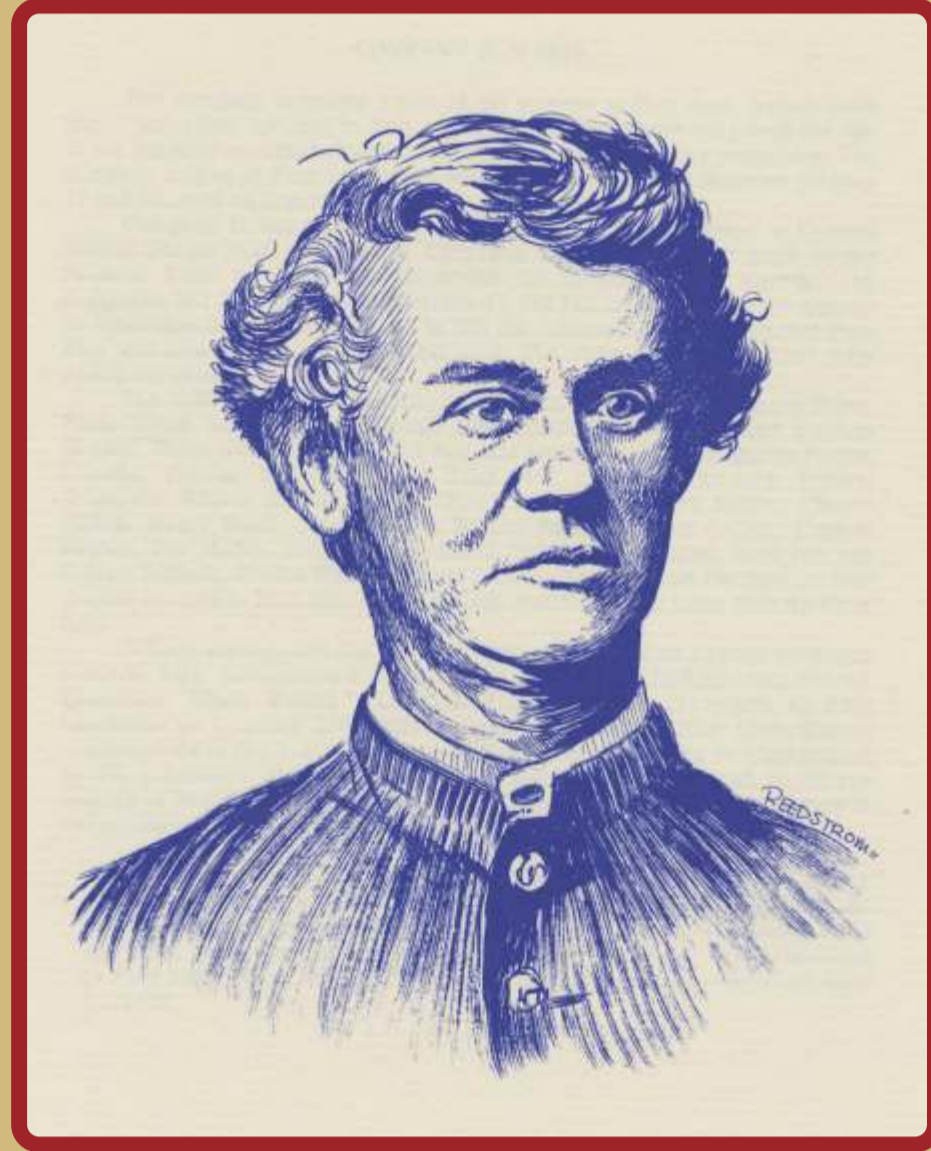
U.S. Seventh Cavalry, the Custer Expedition & Base Ball



The American Civil War played a major role in the introduction and evolution of the game of baseball. Both Union and Confederate soldiers played the game in their spare time. Upon conclusion of the war, veterans returning home helped to spread baseball throughout the country in the late 1860s. It is no surprise that the U.S. Seventh Cavalry, under Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer, took the game with them to the Western frontier.



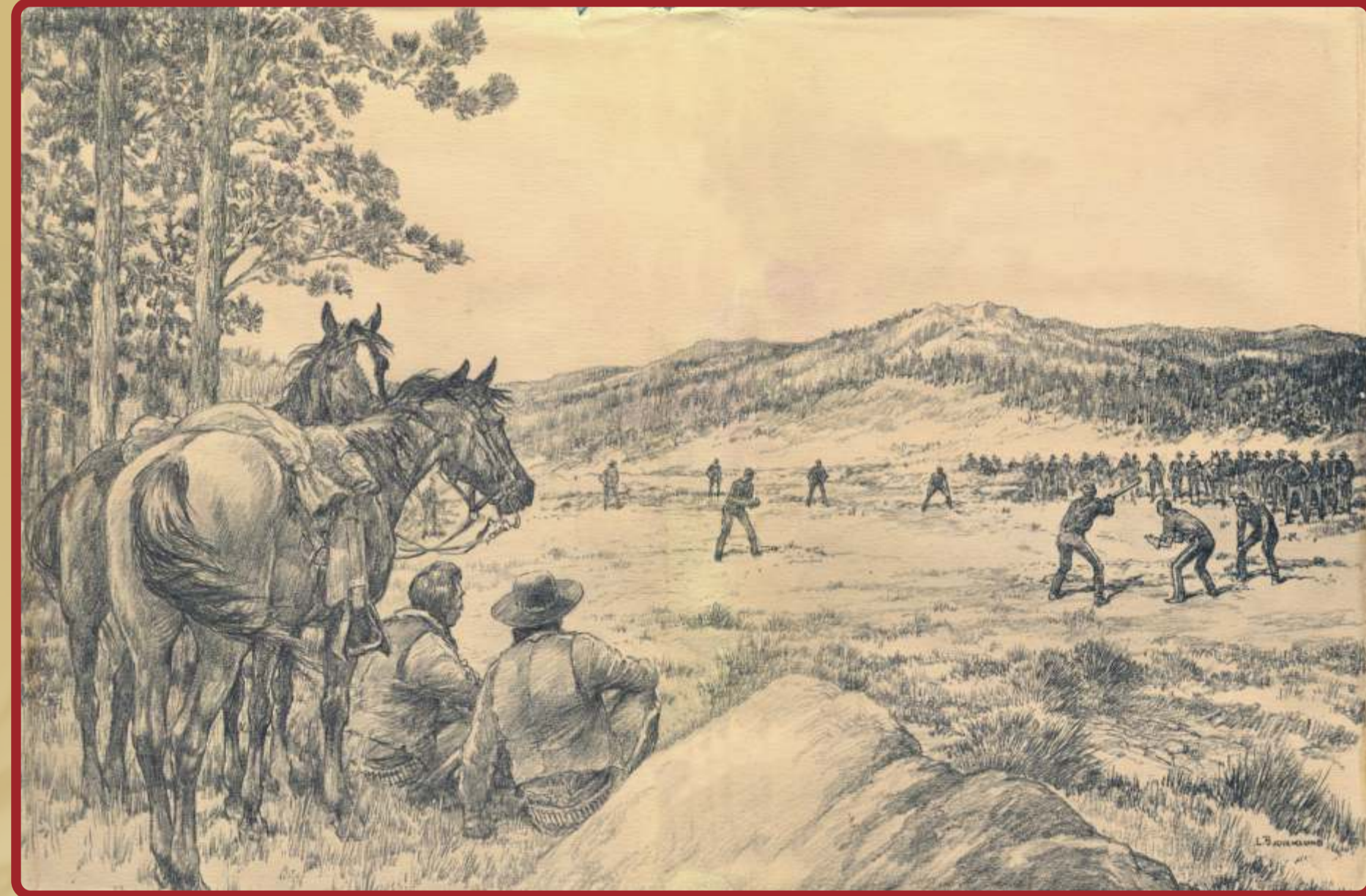
1874 stereoview of the Custer Expedition's permanent camp near the present day City of Custer, South Dakota.
Minnesota Historical Association, Rapid City, South Dakota



Portrait of Captain Frederick W. Benteen from the book *Men with Custer: Biographies of the 7th Cavalry 25, June 1876* by Kenneth Hammer. Portraits by Lisle Reedstrom. Copyright 1972.
Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies, Black Hills State University

Captain Frederick W. Benteen of the Seventh Cavalry was an avid player and organizer of "Benteen's Base Ball Club," which included members throughout the regiment. Local newspapers covered baseball games played by members of the Seventh Cavalry while they were located in Yankton and Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory.

In the summer of 1874, Custer and the Seventh Cavalry entered the Black Hills. In addition to military gear and surveying instruments, the Black Hills Expedition also brought along baseball equipment. On July 31, 1874, in a meadow near the present day City of Custer, the Seventh Cavalry Active Base Ball Club played the Athlete Club. An account of this event was recorded in Private Theodore Ewert's diary chronicling the first baseball game played in the Black Hills. Eleven days later, a second baseball game was played near present day Nemo, South Dakota.



Dust Jacket from the book *Private Theodore Ewert's Diary of the Black Hills Expedition of 1874* depicting the first baseball game played in the Black Hills. Copyright 1976.
Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Two years after the Black Hills Expedition, the Seventh Cavalry engaged the Sioux and Cheyenne along the Little Bighorn River in Montana and were defeated. Among the wounded was Company H First Sergeant Joseph McCurry, team captain and pitcher. McCurry had been offered the chance to turn professional when he returned East in the fall of 1877. His wounds at the Little Bighorn ended his baseball career.

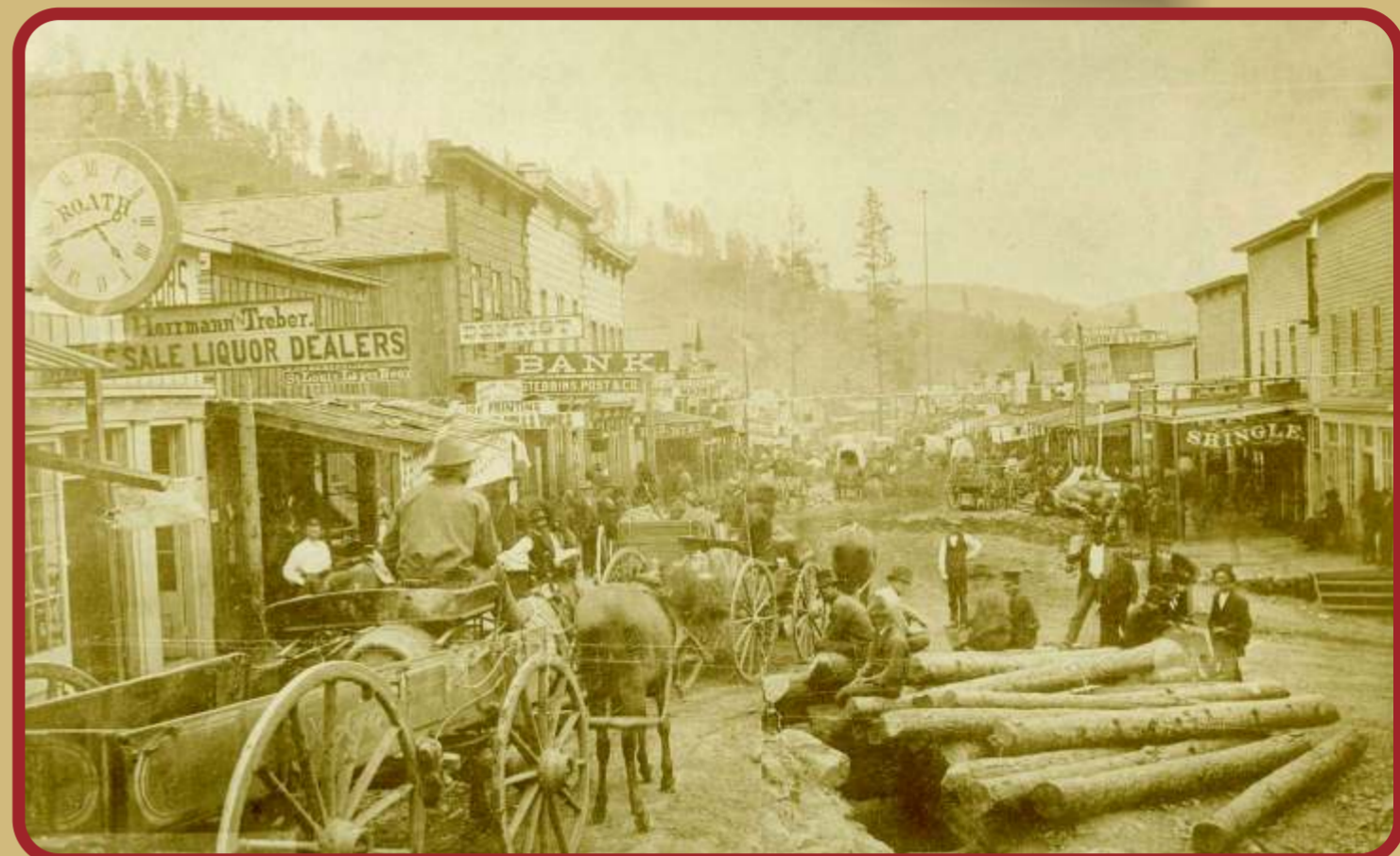
Lithographic print of Union prisoners of war engaged in a baseball game at the Salisbury, North Carolina military prison. Artist: Acting Major Otto Boetticher, 1863.
Library of Congress



Base Ball in the Mining Camps



On June 26, 1877 the Black Hills Daily Times newspaper announced that "base ball fever has at last reached Deadwood". Within one year, the mining camps, military posts and towns of Deadwood, Lead, Terraville, Fort Meade, Central City, Rapid City, Spearfish and Crook City had baseball teams. Club names such as the Athletics, Metropolitans, Pastime, Bush-Whackers, Rough & Ready's and Stars would compete against one another throughout the summer months. Many of the club names originated from Eastern baseball teams, which, along with the descriptions of the games, indicated the local population's extensive knowledge of baseball.



Streetscape of Deadwood's Main Street, circa 1877.
Nancy Falkner Collection, City of Deadwood Archives

In a match game of base ball yesterday afternoon on the Whitewood grounds, the "Stars" of Deadwood defeated the "Rough & Ready's" of Central by a score of 32 to 26.

June 17, 1878 Black Hills Daily Times newspaper recording the first organized game of baseball in Deadwood Gulch.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library

"It is estimated that \$5,000 passed hands, one gentleman alone losing \$1,100 and that fool umpire may consider himself in great luck that he escaped being thumped."

Black Hills Daily Times
October 13, 1886

In its early years, mining camp ball games were loosely organized, social gatherings where gambling on the outcome of games was a common occurrence. To increase the hype of the match, local ball clubs printed boastful challenges in the newspaper and advertised cash purses for the victorious team. During games, lively disputes often erupted between the spectators, players and umpires over the fair play of the game. In some instances, local ball clubs, including Deadwood, recruited professional baseball players to gain a competitive edge over their opponents.

"Two men were out, and Bittinger who was on first, attempted to steal second, but was caught, and then the dirty loafer deliberately knocked the ball from Apfield's hands, and then struck him a violent blow with his clenched hand. Apfield started to retaliate, and all the Chadron players gathered around him, but a gentleman from Rapid City rushed out and, drawing a revolver told Bittinger that he would shoot him full of holes. The marshal interferred, however, and saved the white-livered cur's life."

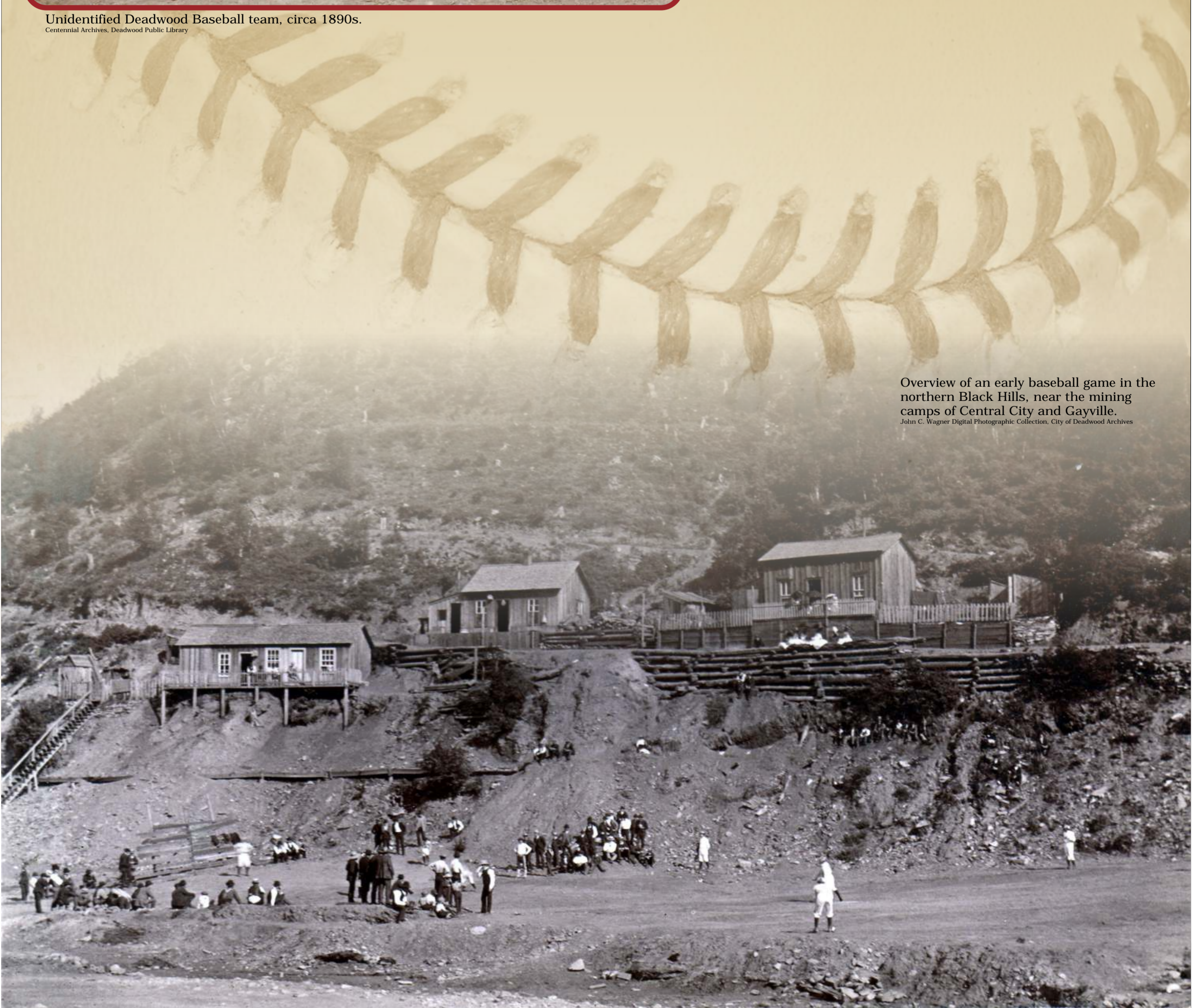
Black Hills Daily Times
August 5, 1890



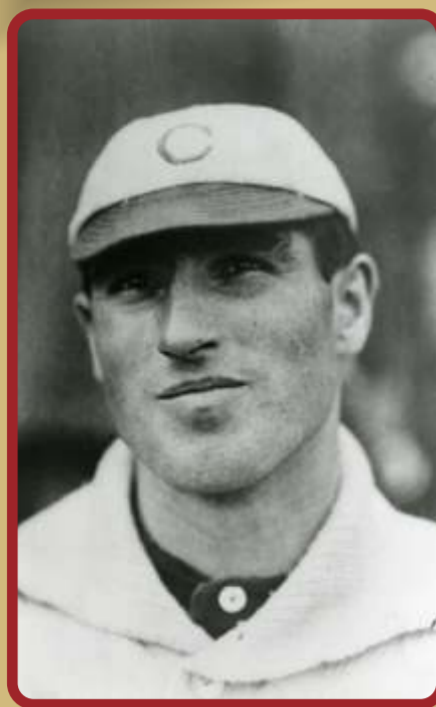
Unidentified Deadwood Baseball team, circa 1890s.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library

To combat against gambling and regulate the fair play of the game, Black Hills baseball clubs began to formally organize, providing bylaws for the club and written rules to govern the conduct of the players and the game. This was solidified on August 11, 1885, when the "Black Hills Base Ball League" was officially organized. League members included the Metropolitans of Deadwood, Eighty-Stamps of Rapid City, Athletes of Fort Meade, Belt Club of Central City and Terraville, Red Stockings of Spearfish, and the Sturgis Nine of Sturgis. The Black Hills Base Ball League was the first attempt at creating a regulated consortium of Black Hills teams, a precedent that would continue into the twentieth century.

Overview of an early baseball game in the northern Black Hills, near the mining camps of Central City and Gayville.
John C. Wagner Digital Photographic Collection, City of Deadwood Archives



Deadwood's Early Contributors To The National Pastime



James "Death Valley Jim" Scott as a Chicago White Sox, circa 1910.
National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York

James "Death Valley Jim" Scott
1888 - 1957

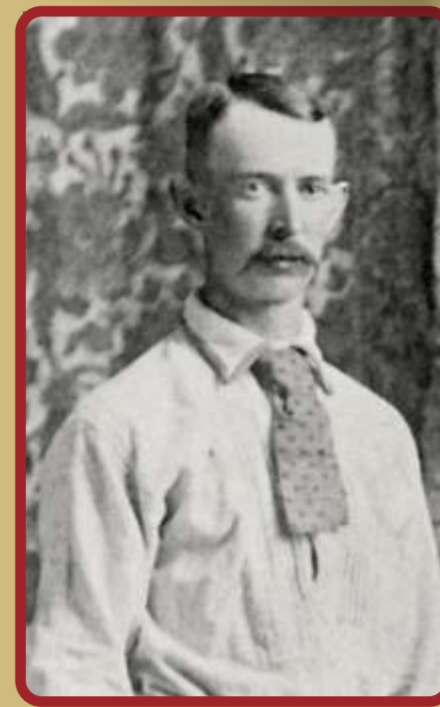
"Death Valley" Jim Scott was born in Deadwood, Dakota Territory on April 23, 1888. Scott's father worked as a government weather observer which resulted in the family moving numerous times during his childhood. In 1907, Scott was "discovered" pitching for the Lander, Wyoming. Nine by J. P. Cantillon of Des Moines, Iowa. Although unsuccessful in Des Moines, Scott went on to play for Oskaloosa of the Iowa State League. In 1908, Scott won thirty games for Wichita of the Western Association. One year later, Scott became a pitcher for the Chicago White Sox. In 1913, he won twenty games and lost twenty-one games in one season, a major league first. Scott won twenty-four games with the 1916 White Sox. He was a mainstay of the White Sox into the 1917 season. He was one of the first major leaguers to volunteer to serve in World War I. He returned to pitch for San Francisco of the Pacific Coast League, winning twenty-three games in 1920 and twenty-five in 1922.



Harry Marshall from the Champions of the World: Deadwood Hose Team, dated July 4, 1888.
Deadwood History, Adams Museum Collection

Henry John Peter Marshall
1864 - 1922

In the late 1870s, Harry John Peter Marshall followed his older brother Romeo Marshall to the Black Hills and settled in Lead, Dakota Territory. Within five years, Harry established a barbershop in Deadwood, an occupation that would follow him throughout his life. In his early twenties, Marshall began to participate in sports and soon became known as a superb athlete in foot races, hose races and baseball. As a result of his natural athletic abilities, Harry became recognized as one of the earliest black baseball players to have graced the game in the northern Black Hills. Accounts of his athletic prowess are recorded in the local newspapers during the 1880s and 1890s. During this time, Marshall helped organize the first all-black baseball team in Lead. Harry also worked as an umpire for numerous league games, due to his honesty and astute knowledge of the game. In 1895, Harry and his family relocated to Pueblo, Colorado where he continued working as a barber until his death in 1922.



Charles A. Maskrey playing for the Rapid City Eighty-Stamps, 1887.
C.W. Irvin Collection, Minnhusa Historical Association, Rapid City, South Dakota

Charles A. Maskrey
1858 - 1920

Charles A. Maskrey of Mercer, Pennsylvania was one of four brothers who played professional baseball during his life. At age 25, Charles arrived in Deadwood in the summer of 1884 and took work as a newspaper printer and later editor. For seven years, Maskrey became a regular in the northern Black Hills baseball circuit, playing and umpiring for the local Deadwood ball clubs.

Charles's biggest accomplishment in regards to the history of Deadwood was his role in organizing and developing the Deadwood Base Ball Association in July of 1885. One year later, Charles younger brother Frank Maskrey arrived in Deadwood and played one season with his brother for the Deadwood Metropolitans. In 1887, Charles joined the Rapid City Eighty-Stamps for one season. By 1892, Charles relocated from Deadwood to Washington where he continued playing baseball and working in the newspaper industry.



Old Judge Cigarette Baseball Card of William Franklin "Bill" Traffley playing for the Des Moines Prohibitionists, circa 1894.
National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York

William Franklin "Bill" Traffley
1859 - 1908

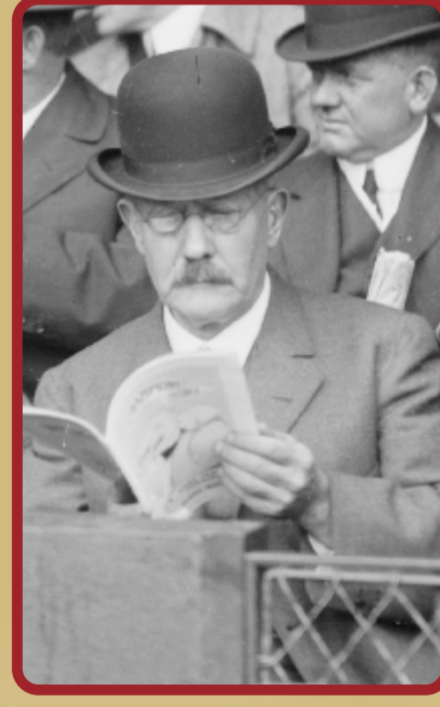
Bill Traffley, a catcher, began his professional baseball career with the Chicago White Stockings of the National League in 1878. Over the course of his baseball career, Traffley played for the Omaha Green Stockings, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the Baltimore Orioles, and the Minneapolis Millers. In 1892, Traffley arrived in Deadwood as a player and manager. He brought along an eighteen year old named Ernest "Kid" Mohler. Mohler and Traffley played baseball in Deadwood for one season. Two years later, Traffley joined the Des Moines Prohibitionists as a player and manager. In 1896, his team won a then record twenty-five straight games.



Earnest Follette "Kid" Mohler playing for the San Francisco Seals, circa 1900.
Mark Macrae Collection, Castro Valley, California

Ernest Follette "Kid" Mohler
1870-1961

A young eighteen year old named Earnest "Kid" Mohler arrived in Deadwood on June 2, 1892 and played one season with the Deadwood Club. Two years later in 1894, Mohler played professional ball with the Washington Senators. After one season with the Senators, Mohler continued to play professional baseball in the West for twenty-three years. He played a record of 2,871 games at second base and became a star of the San Francisco Seals during the early Pacific Coast League.



Joe Flanner at Game 2 of the 1913 World Series at Shibe Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Library of Congress

Alonzo Joseph "Joe" Flanner
1851 - 1913

Although not a baseball player, Joe Flanner's influence as a sportswriter, league official and architect of the legal and business structure of Major League Baseball continues to influence the sport today. In 1877, Joe Flanner arrived in the Black Hills and established himself as Lawrence County's first State's Attorney. In 1892, after fifteen years, Flanner left the Black Hills and became a sports editor for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, then jumped to St. Louis-based The Sporting News. The Sporting News became the "Bible of Baseball" during this time. Flanner was one of three men who drafted the National Agreement of 1903, creating the legal structure and business setup for Major League Baseball that is still largely in place today.

Deadwood and Andrews baseball clubs posing on the side of the Deadwood City Hall, circa 1890 to 1907.
Minnhusa Historical Association, Rapid City, South Dakota



HistoryLink

A TRAIL TO DEADWOOD'S PAST



Babe Ruth & Bob Meusel BARNSTORMING TOUR 1922



October 19, 1922, was perhaps the biggest day in Deadwood baseball history. On this day, New York Yankees Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel came to town for an exhibition game at the Deadwood Amusement Park. Deadwood was one of eighteen games played throughout the upper Midwest during the 1922 tour.

DEADWOOD	ALL-STARS
Arsers, rf	Gordon, ss
Eilers, c	Renschell, rf
Morford, E., 3b	Townsend, 2b
RUTH, 1b	MEUSEL, 1b
Gorum, p	Cole, lf
Rakestraw, ss	Yenzick, 3b
Ewing, cf	Holley cf
Nussrallah, lf	Hale, c
Elward, 2b	Meade, p
Morford, L.,	Hejde,
Eilers, J.,	Gronert,

Excerpt from the *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times* newspaper dated October 19, 1922, providing the lineup and batting order for the Ruth and Meusel game.

SEE
Babe Ruth
— AND —
Bob Meusel
American League World Series Stars
HIT A HOME RUN
In an Exhibition Baseball Game
At DEADWOOD
AMUSEMENT PARK
TODAY
Dance by Deadwood Baseball Team
at Auditorium this Evening
Gaiety Orchestra
EVERYBODY
WELCOME

Newspaper advertisement for the October 19, 1922 Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel game.

Prior to the game, Deadwood Mayor William E. Adams issued a proclamation which allowed Deadwood businesses to close their doors for the day and excused students from school for the afternoon. Local newspapers estimated that over 1,000 spectators would attend the game. Local newspapers also warned: *"The grounds will be policed with a large force to discourage small boys (and others) from attempting an entrance other than thru the toll gate at the main entrance,"*

On the morning of the game, the Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times front page read, "RUTH AND MEUSEL START THRILLER AT 2 O'CLOCK TODAY," and ran long stories about the upcoming game with photos of Babe, Mrs. Ruth, Meusel and local Deadwood baseball players. Tickets for the game were \$1.10, with \$1 for parking and another 55 cents for those who wanted a reserved seat in the grandstand. Children could see the game for 55 cents.

Ruth and Meusel both played first base and pitched briefly, Babe with the Deadwood team and Meusel with the Black Hills All-Stars. The game itself proved to be a letdown. Deadwood beat the All-Stars 4-2, neither team getting much help from the baseball legends. Meusel, in his four at-bats, struck out once and popped out three times. Ruth batted three times, had two hits and one run. The Yankee stars said good things about their teammates, then left town to catch their team for their next stop on the barnstorming tour.

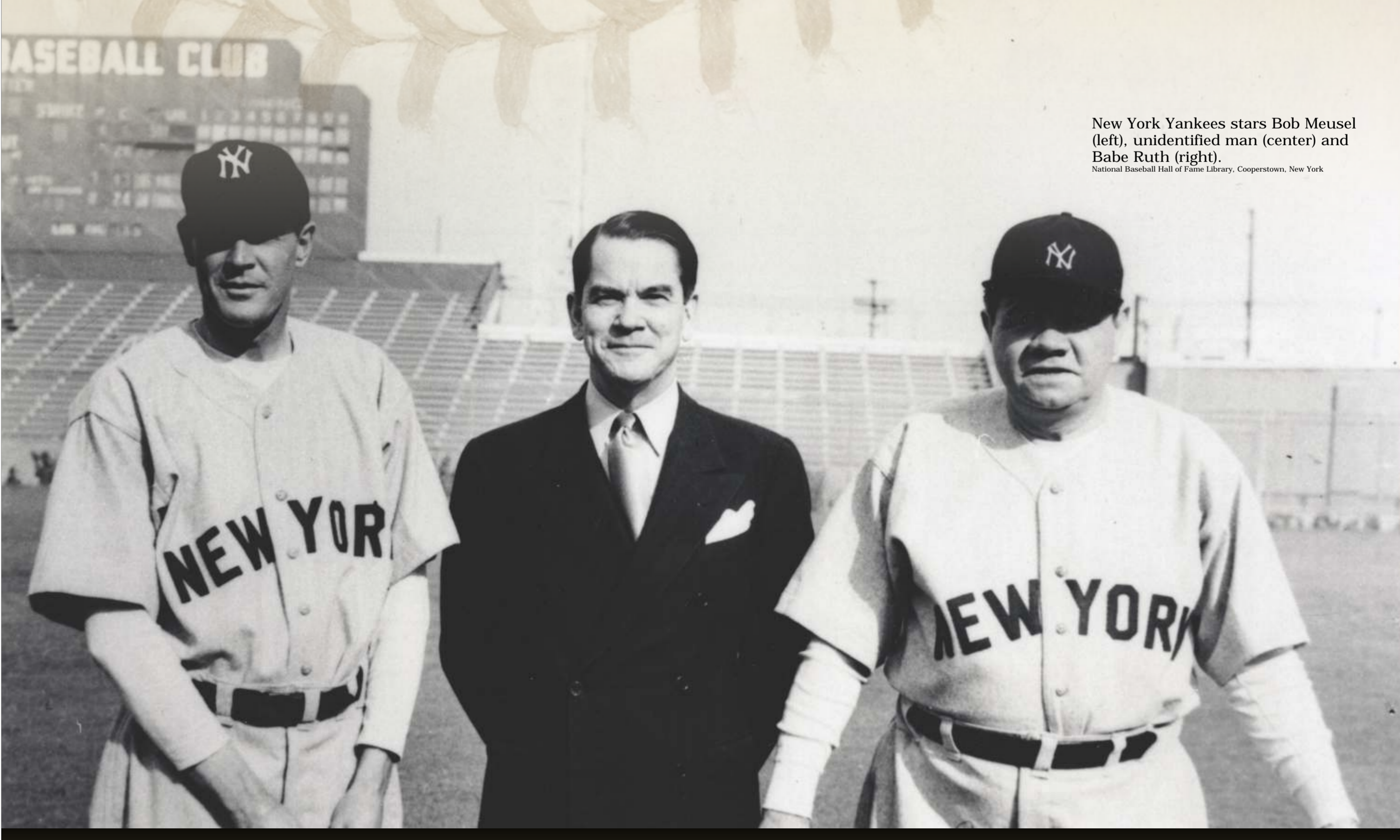
OFFICIAL SCORE CARD
"Babe" Ruth and "Bob" Meusel
home run hitters of the
NEW YORK AMERICAN
World Series Team
Playing With
DEADWOOD
and a picked team from the
BLACK HILLS LEAGUE
Thursday, Oct. 19th
At DEADWOOD, SO. DAK.
Game Called at 2 O'clock
PRICE TEN CENTS

Official score card from the October 19, 1922 Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel game.

CHAMPIONS BLACK HILLS LEAGUE 1922

EARL MORFORD Third Base
VIRGIL RAKESTRAW Shortstop
"BILL" EWING Second Base
DAVE LIFSCHUTZ Utility
"AXEL" ARSERS First Base
JOHN EILERS Utility
ED. RENTZ Score
ELLERY KNOWLES Business Manager
E.A. RAKESTRAW League Director
"BUTCH" KENWORTHY President
BERT ELWARD Center Field
JOHN NEAVILL Right Field
JOHN SMIRCH Catcher
"BUZZY" GORUM Pitcher
LEE MORFORD Manager
MILLER McVEY Pitcher
CARL EILERS Catcher

1922 Black Hills Baseball League Champions - Deadwood Baseball Club. The Black Hills League included the cities of Lead, Spearfish, Sturgis, Rapid City, Deadwood, and Aladdin, Wyoming.



New York Yankees stars Bob Meusel (left), unidentified man (center) and Babe Ruth (right).

Play Ball! But Where in Deadwood?



Would you believe that Deadwood had five different baseball fields within or just outside the city limits? The biggest challenge early Deadwood baseball clubs faced was finding a good, level place to play ball. Once that challenge was met, they still encountered competing interests for the small amount of ground in Deadwood Gulch. The following panel provides a brief overview of Deadwood's early baseball fields.

"One of the most pleasant and enjoyable games ever seen in the Hills was the one played yesterday afternoon at the fair grounds between the Eighty-Stampers of Rapid City and the Metropolitans of Deadwood."

Black Hills Daily Pioneer
September 22, 1885

1. Deadwood Driving Park and Fairground

In 1880, The Deadwood Driving Park Association began developing a horse racing complex. Approximately two miles east of the Deadwood city limits, this fairground boasted an oval racetrack, clubhouse and stables for horse and sulky racing. By August of 1880, the Deadwood Base Ball Club received permission to develop a diamond at the fairgrounds. Over the next five years, numerous baseball games were played at this location. In September of 1885, the fairgrounds witnessed one of the earliest recorded baseball tournaments in the Black Hills. This field was eventually abandoned due to its distance from Deadwood and the creation of the Olympic Park in Deadwood in the 1890s.

2. Dudley Saw Mill Site

In 1876, E. G. Dudley of Montana City, Dakota Territory opened a portable sawmill in this vicinity. For six years, the Dudley sawmill was a permanent fixture in the mining camp before being dismantled in March of 1882.

Three years later, the newly formed Deadwood Base Ball Association received permission to develop the Old Dudley Sawmill site and adjacent grounds into a baseball diamond. Over the next ten years, this ball field was used in conjunction with the Deadwood fairgrounds.

"The Deadwood Base Ball association fortunately obtained permission to use the ground including the site of the old Dudley sawmill, and by a small expenditure, will have as good a field as can be found in the territory."

Black Hills Daily Times
July 18, 1885

3. Deadwood Amusement Park

In 1914, a group of citizens petitioned the City for the development of a park in Deadwood's First Ward. The proposed park would contain a race track, a football field, and a baseball diamond. The Deadwood City Commission under the direction of Mayor Nathan Franklin began negotiations with the Burlington Railroad and secured the land for the park. During the next three years, work progressed on the new field. The wood grandstand from McDonald Park was moved to the amusement park in the fall of 1916. On July 19, 1917, the Deadwood Amusement Park was open to the public and became one of the crowning achievements of Deadwood's public park system.

Today, the Deadwood Amusement Park consists of the Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds and Museum, the Ferguson Football Field and Stadium and the Keene Memorial Baseball Field.

"Mayor Franklin announced that all necessary ground had been secured for the proposed amusement park in the First Ward... It is proposed to first install an athletic grounds and later add such features, including a race track, as the finances of the city will permit"

Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times
August 11, 1914

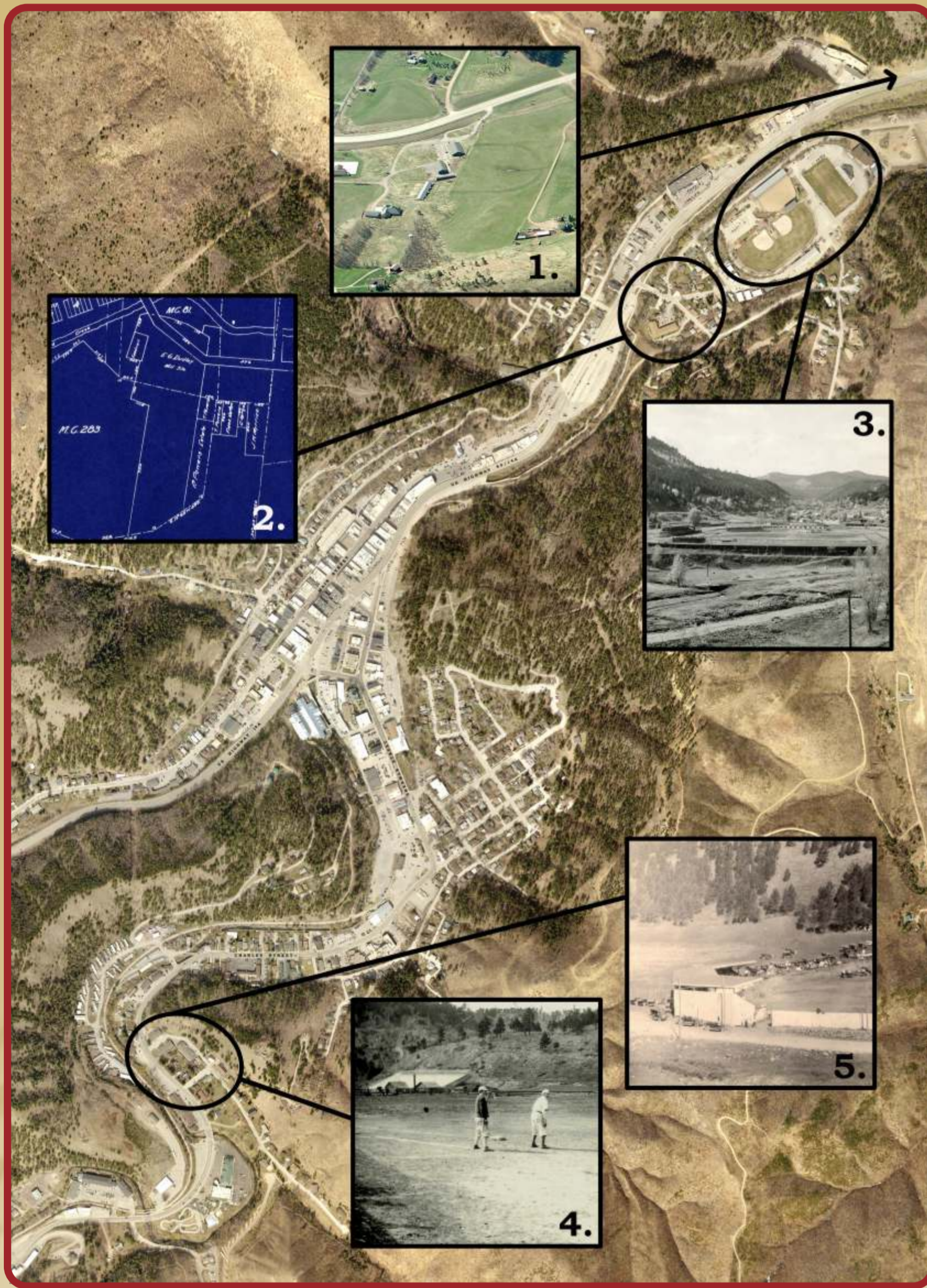
4. & 5. Olympic Park and McDonald Park

The Olympic Club, a men's athletic association, leased ground within Pecks Garden for the development of a baseball field. From 1892 until 1904, the Olympic Park served as the official baseball park in Deadwood. In 1904, the leased ground that made up the Olympic Park was purchased and a greenhouse was built in the location of the ball diamond.

Within two months, Deadwood Mayor Edward McDonald and the Deadwood City Commission negotiated and secured land adjacent to the greenhouse from the Burlington Railroad. On July 19, 1904 a new baseball field, dubbed "McDonald Park", was officially dedicated. For thirteen years, McDonald Park served as the official baseball park in Deadwood.

"This is the first park in which the city had any vested rights - which was made possible by the courtesy of the Burlington Railroad company - consequently, this opening day will form an epoch in the history of our city"

Excerpt from Deadwood Mayor Edward McDonald's opening day speech on July 19, 1904



1. 2013 aerial photograph of the Deadwood Fairgrounds. Today, a portion of the oval race track is still visible.
Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission

2. Portion of the 1890 P.L. Rogers Official Map of the City of Deadwood showing the location of the E. G. Dudley sawmill.
Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission

3. Deadwood's First Ward and the Deadwood Amusement Park, circa 1927.
Vicki Strickland Collection, City of Deadwood Archives

4. Deadwood's Olympic Park, circa 1895. The greenhouse built into the hillside is visible in the background of the photograph.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library

5. An overview of McDonald Park near present day Cliff Street, circa 1914.
Albert Auer Digital Photograph Collection, City of Deadwood Archives

Overview of the Olympic Park, near the present day Burlington Street.
Centennial Archives, Deadwood Public Library

