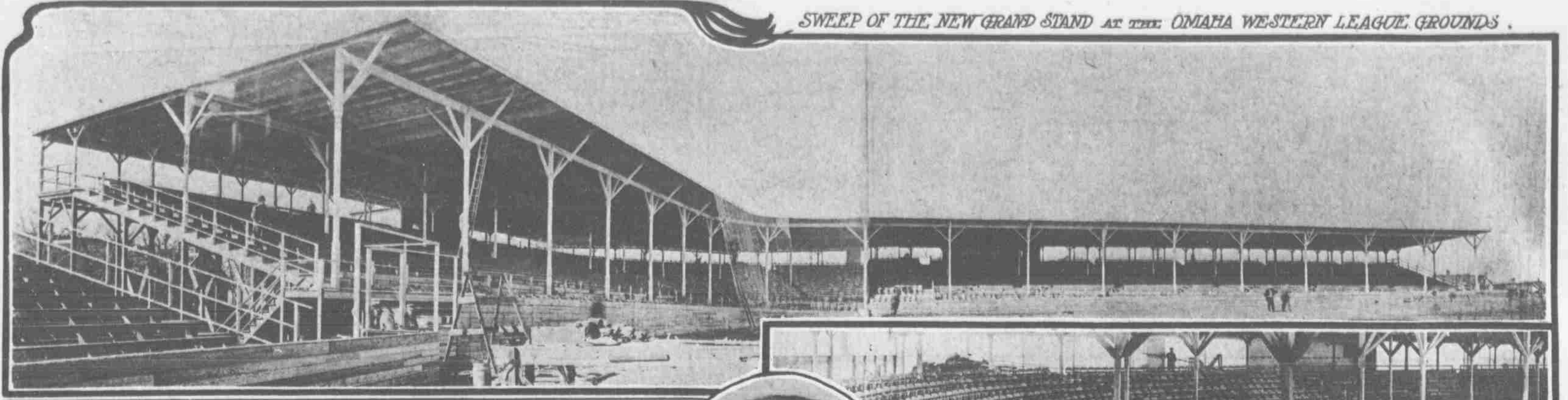


# Rejuvenated Vinton Street Park Has Metropolitan Air

SWEEP OF THE NEW GRAND STAND AT THE OMAHA WESTERN LEAGUE GROUNDS.



NE day when the sun had begun to warm the earth The Bug stuck his head above a little ridge of ground and extended his feelers into the atmosphere to sense the degree of warmth. Then The Bug blinked a few times and finally held his faceted lamps wide open.

"Well, well," he said, "what is the meaning of this? Doesn't seem to me this is my old stamping ground. These sceneries haven't the familiar look of things I used to know. Guess I'll have to investigate."

So The Bug carefully felt his way over the ridge and prowled cautiously onto a smooth place from which a good view could be had. After some contemplative prospecting in this direction and that, he focused his regard on one particular spot where something seemed to be doing. "I'm in the right church, anyway," he whispered slowly to himself, "but someone has moved my pew. It used to be right close to the wall here, but now the wall is so far away I can't reach it to lean on comfortably. And that long, cobwebby thing over yon wasn't in sight when I took the last peek at this place after those ugly Soos took away the pennant."

By this time The Bug had got his eyes fully open and had taken his bearings. He moved further over toward center and suddenly stopped.

## Saw Many Familiar Faces.

"Well, if there ain't Dan! Yes, sir, that's Dan, all right; and he's raking away just as he was when I saw him last. But what in the name of a sizzling grasscutters has got into this place? And if there ain't Dave, too; and that fellow with the King Alfonso hat on looks just like Papa Bill. Pa, by Jiminy, and he's got his spring smile working too. Well, of all things, this beats my sister's cat's kittens. Why, I must have been sleeping, or is this a dream?"

And The Bug rubbed his eyes and threw the brake off his brain wheels, while he peered across the field harder than ever.

"No, it's not a dream," said The Bug presently, as a big grin opened his sooting face. "Not by a long shot, no dream. There's old Kid Goding. I'd know him anywhere; he's so forgetful of birthdays from long association with Pa Bill I suppose. And who's that rampaging across the line here? Why, it's the Skipper, sure as I'm a bug, and he looks quick, too. And there's some other chaps I know, and I'll bet on it. I've been asleep, that's what I've been; and here's all this joy work planned and finished. O, watch me, boys."

Then The Bug turned a hand spring or two, loosened up his galluses and streaked it for the base lines.

## New Prospect is Very Pleasing.

The Bug was right. He had picked the identical people that were getting busy over on the firing line. Pa Rourke, and Brother Dave, and Dan Kennedy, and Goding, and Skipper Bill, with a bunch of huskies of old pledge and new promise, were all out in the sunshine at Omaha's new base ball park. The Bug found them too busy to pay much attention to him personally right then, so he took his stand in a nice moist place near the water pail and ruminated joyfully on the changed aspect of things. He noted with delight that the left field fence had been moved out a goodly distance; in fact, that a much bigger prospect had been opened up all around the line. Some unlucky humps that used to jar the soul of The Bug and many like him had been torn out by the roots, and the diamond and the field surrounding bore evidence of being quite on the level. Mentally measuring things as they appeared to his happy view, The Bug decided he couldn't have done the thing better himself. Then, the novelty of the new field and the work of the sod-layers having palled a bit, The Bug swung round and took in the new grandstand. Its extent and generous dimensions caused him to stand up on his hind legs and lean over backward.

"Why that looks like a circus with the canvas sides left off," said The Bug. "Where in the name of Dan Kennedy's sprinkling pot will they get people to fill those seats?"

"Never mind bothering your head about that," said Kennedy, who happened to hear the remark. "We'll fill it when cherries are ripe, or if we don't, me qucko, we'll give everybody plenty of room. People like you are always borrowing trouble when they ought to be cutting grass."

"Excuse me," said The Bug, "I thought you were only a part of the landscape." And he twisted his feet around his neck as the groundkeeper passed on.

## New Stand Has Metropolitan Air.

The Bug, or the Fan, or anyone else, may well open his eyes in glad realization over the superb appearance and the most commodious size of the new grandstand in the Omaha ball park. It has the real metropolitan air from keel to flag staff, and will seat 8,100 people. Counting the space in the three-foot aisles and back of the seats, at the top of the stand, there is ample room for 7,500 people.

Of box seats 800 are provided, and 1,200 chairs are available, with 4,100 other seats. There is but one bleacher, but it will accommodate 2,500 people. It is back of first base and runs to the limit of right field almost. The grandstand and bleacher are both solidly built, with plenty of leg space, and present a decidedly attractive appearance. In the upper part of the grandstand are two booths for the concessionaires, from which all the fodder, soft drinks and smokes will be sent out.

Manager Rourke says the new ground, as it will appear on the opening day, represents an outlay of

\$32,000. When he decided to go ahead with the construction of a real ball park, the plans were made on a liberal scale. A good deal of grading and filling had to be done, and not a stick of the old plant was left standing except the club house, a comparatively new structure. The old grandstand, bleachers and fences were torn out and sent to the scrap heap. Then, when the grading and filling was done, the new fence was built seventy feet further back on the north and fifty feet on the east. The left foul line is now thirty-four feet longer than of yore, and the right foul line fourteen feet longer. All the space from the base lines to the grandstand is being sodded, and within a month or two is expected to be green, soft and velvety. The home plate is closer to the grandstand than it used to be.

The stand itself is twenty-seven feet in height from concrete base to roof. It is seventy feet wide and 450 feet in extreme length. Two broad stairways will give access to it from the runway just inside the turnstiles.

## Bandle Recalls Old Times.

When Frank Bandle, now register of deeds of Douglas county, saw the new grandstand he began making speeches about the grandstands of other days.

"They weren't grandstands at all, as the present day fans understand the word," said Bandle. "They were planks set on stringers, and about as hard and uncomfortable as lumber could be made. Of course, in the old days I was not in the habit of sitting in grandstands. I was one of the working men then, right out there behind the plate; and when I take my ease at a game, nowadays, it seems strange that once I used to work like that, and enjoy it—go without meals, if necessary, just to get the chance to carbonize a lot of air by struggling until my lungs ached from the pumping they got."

## Clever Tricks of the Thieves

A RETROSPECTIVE glance over recent experiences shows that the crooks are holding their own in the matter of originality of device and cleverness of ideas," says a detective quoted by the Philadelphia Record.

"One of the most striking things about the tricks of the pickpocket is their absurd simplicity. The man who takes every precaution to guard against theft leaves himself open to robbery because of the apparently innocent action that precedes the purloining of his pocketbook or scarfpin. For instance, who would see in the very natural action of a man who folds his arms in a crowd anything suspicious? A hundred men will do it, and there will be nothing more in the action than a natural desire to assume a restful attitude while listening to a strange speaker or standing in a crowded car. But the hundred and first man is a crook, and mark how simple is the manner in which he works."

"All the time the crook has his arms folded the hand nearest the victim is creeping out, under cover of the folded arm, and the educated fingers of the thief are feeling their way toward the stud in the shirt front of the man who is pressed against him in the crowd, or are creeping into his inside pocket in search of his wallet. A man who is entirely without suspicion of his neighbor in the crowd would never think of watching the folded arms. The action itself disarms suspicion, because until it is explained it seems impossible for a man to use his hands for stealing while he stands in that position. The simplicity of the thing, as I have said, is its strongest point."

"Another clever means of concealing the movements of the hand is to use an open newspaper. Nothing is more natural in a crowded car than for a man to open up his newspaper and have considerable difficulty in getting the page doubled under. There is scarcely room for the blanket sheet of the modern daily to be turned when men and women are standing huddled together in a crowded car. No one would even glance at a man who turns down the page and gets at the next page by doubling the paper over his hand, and few people are on to the trick of the crook who, while turning his paper, has an exceedingly active hand at work beneath the outspread sheet. The paper is thrust almost in the face of the man sitting beneath the crook. In the few seconds that it rests on the Adam's apple of the victim the hand beneath the paper has snatched the scarfpin or twisted out the diamond from the shirt front."

"The cleverness of it amounts to jugglery. It actually is jugglery, for in no other way could a diamond be torn from its setting without the owner knowing of its loss. It is done by means of a pair of pliers, made especially for the purpose. The pliers grasp the diamond and a dexterous turn of the hand extracts it from the setting. It doesn't take long for one of our skilled operators to accomplish this. All the time the newspaper hides the hand and the more crowded the car the easier it is for the operation."

"Beware of the man who pushes against you when you are leaving the theater or getting on and off a crowded car. All the time he is nervously pushing you in the back, apparently to accelerate the progress of the crowd, he is exploring your pockets through your coat, and he can tell as unerringly from the outside what is hidden in those pockets as if he had X-ray eyes and could see through a heavily lined coat."

"Most men feel fairly well protected against the pickpocket if they wear an overcoat covering the pocket in which they carry their money. The skill



"PA" ROURKE

"And don't forget that we used to have to work our way to the grounds in those days. The oldest ball park was at about Eighteenth and Ohio streets, and an alleged street car line used to carry the people to this point—sometimes. Mules of the most ancient vintage possible to secure were the motive power, the tracks were pliable to a high degree, and most any sort of storm, or a hint of mud, would make riding on that line quite uncertain. I recall

that sometimes we refused to pay our fare until we could be reasonably sure that we would be taken to the end of the line. It will be understood that considerable fun used to attach to the trips to the ball ground."

"The B. & M. grounds were close by, and as not the slightest hint of love existed between the Union Pacific and B. & M. teams whenever they came in conjunction, the air was cool, even on blazing hot days. Why, it got so at one time if a Union Pacific man and a B. & M. man met each other on the same side of the street one would have to take to the road; and that's not a dream. Base ball teams cherished rivalries in those days."

## Where Former Omaha Stars Shone.

The old park where the original Union Pacific played was enclosed in 1879, and the B. & M. grounds about the same time. In 1880 the Nail works team got into the game, with grounds at the Nail works, near the government corral. In '81 and '82 the U. P. grounds were at Sixteenth and Locust. In '83 the grounds were located at Eighteenth and St. Mary's avenue, and here many famous games were played. This park had the advantage that is enjoyed by the famous Polo grounds in New York. People could sit on the high ground outside the fence and watch the game without paying the price of admission. Later Omaha entered the Western league and a park was enclosed at Twentieth and Miami streets. This was a famous headquarters for the real thing. The struggles of the teams out there are part of the classic history of Omaha. Omaha won the pennant in 1889, with Frank Selee leading the team, and would have repeated in 1891 but for the fact that the league went to pieces. When Omaha dropped out of the Western the park was taken over by the University Athletic club, and later by the Young Men's Christian association. Later, in 1894, Bill Rourke, Dave Rowe and Tom McVittie built the famous "cigar box" park at Seventeenth and Charles. Home runs became so numerous at this park the scorers kicked on being overworked, and the toy park was abandoned for the wide expanse at the old state fair grounds which used to be located just south of Ames avenue, from Sixteenth to Twentieth. About 1898 a new ball park occupied the ground where the beautiful residence addition, Prairie Park, now decorates the landscape. Ten years ago the Vinton street park came into existence, and "Pa" has now renewed the lease of the ground for a long term, which accounts for the big sum put into improvements there.

Mr. Bandle is the owner of a great collection of photographs of base ball teams, but one among them that makes him talk is labeled "Omaha, '85." It is too much faded to be reproduced, but this was the team that gave Omaha a place on league maps. The nine men in the picture are "Bobby" Black and "Billy" O'Donnell, pitchers; Bandle and Webber, catchers, and Meister, Dwyer, J. and L. Say and Graham, basemen and fielders. "Of course, we used to change about," says Bandle, "but I do not now recall that we ever carried any extra players except one or two. The fact that only nine men are in the picture leads me to believe we were worrying along with just that number at the time. Players were not so finicky, perhaps, as they are now."

## Old Players Were Not Slow.

Of the men of the '85 team Bandle has only good words, and he says those who are not dead have made good in the various lines of business they took up. Of one in particular, Graham, he insists no better natural player and biter ever stood on a ball field in this section. Graham's particular position was center field.

This old team of '85 represented Omaha in the first Western league, when Kansas City, St. Joseph, Indianapolis, Cleveland and Toledo were the other cities represented. "Bobby" Black afterward became one of the noted "pony battery," of which "Kid" Baldwin was the receiving end. Black wasn't much taller than a base ball bat, but he was wide and strong. He came originally from LeMars, Ia.

The original Northwestern league had preceded the Western by some years, and an account of the first league game in Omaha is to be found in the

SECTION OF THE GRAND STAND SHOWING SEATS

Omaha Morning Herald of May 9, 1879. The score resulted 6 to 3 in favor of Dubuque, yet the Herald said next morning:

If there is any better base ball umpire in the country than Mr. F. D. Thayer, who officiated at the Omaha grounds yesterday, the Herald's base ball man has yet to see him.

A glance over the names of the players in that first Omaha league game will recall some men who later became quite famous in base ball annals. The Omaha team was made up of Bandle, third base; J. Whitney, catcher; Furlong, left field; Burke, short; Willigrod, first base; Hibben, second base; Bailey, right field; Cantillon, center field; C. Whitney, pitcher. On the Dubuque team were: J. Gleason, third base; Radburn, right field; Loftus, second base; Sullivan, catcher; Taylor, left field; Lapham, first base; W. Gleason, short; Alverettas, center field; Reis, pitcher.

## Base Ball Always Popular Here.

The old scribe says of the game, that in spite of rain spatters, "several hundred people were present, the entire northwestern corner being filled with carriages. The rivals were in the field early and had an hour's practice before the game began. (It required an hour and forty-five minutes to finish it.) It was then noticeable that the Dubuque team was much heavier than the Omaha boys; and a fine looking, muscular, gentlemanly lot of men they are. Judging from the physique of the two teams the Dubuques would be selected as the best." And the result this opening day proved the writer's judgment good, although next day Omaha turned the tables.

According to the report Omaha fell down in the second inning, of which the scribe wrote: "This was the fatal inning for Omaha, for which they were not wholly to blame. It was still drizzling, the ground was moist, and the ball was getting wetter every moment. Burke opened for the home team with a beautiful long fly into left field which most players would have missed, but which Taylor 'backed up' for and caught in fine style. Willigrod and Hibben struck out."

Of Dubuque's half this is the mournful account: "Lapham reached first, after three strikes, on Whitney's muff and subsequent poor throw; he steals second, Whitney throwing wild, and Burke's vigilance preventing the ball from going far into the field. Reis makes a short hit to Burke, first fumbled and then thrown wild to second, on which the visitors make three additional scores. Lapham, Alveretta and Reis treading the home plate in quick succession. Radburn lifts up an easy fly, muffed by Burke. Whitney attempts to catch Radburn stealing second and makes an overthrow which gives Radburn third, from which a passed ball brings him in. Loftus strikes out. Total score, 5, and things look gloomy." And the gloom stuck.

## "Out On a Foul Round."

Several players are recorded as being out "on a foul round to catcher," and it is set down that "Bandle's clean hit into the field brings in Bailey's score." Then Bandle went on and stole second without raising a row, but when he tried to also steal third the Dubuque catcher threw him out. At one point the reporter notes that Reis hit a long fly "which was firmly seized by Bailey." Of other captures of flies the words used, "taken in splendid style," would indicate some pride in good playing.

Here's a picture that might well do credit to any field today: "J. Gleason hits a long fly to left field, far to Furlong's left, but he makes a grand run, throwing himself into the air after the ball, when he finds it impossible to keep his feet, and securing it, holds it aloft as he lies on the ground—one of the finest plays of the game."

Commenting on the result, the reporter said: "Both pitchers were very effective. Five out on strikes and eleven on flies speaks well for Whitney's work, and nine on strikes and eight on flies quite as well for Reis. A lusty shout from Captain Burke, in at least two instances yesterday, would have prevented errors by the Omahas and bases for the Dubuques."

The Omaha manager, E. E. Balch, is handed a compliment for the ground arrangements, which were favorably commented on by the visitors.