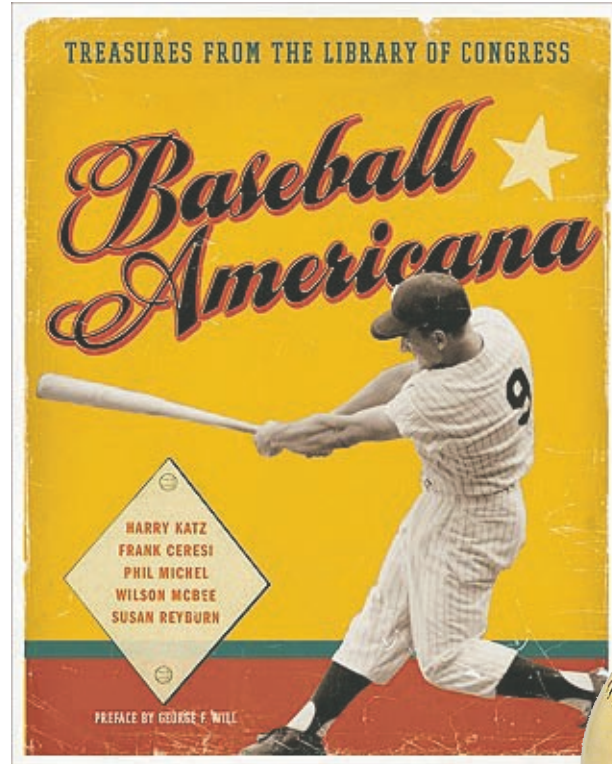


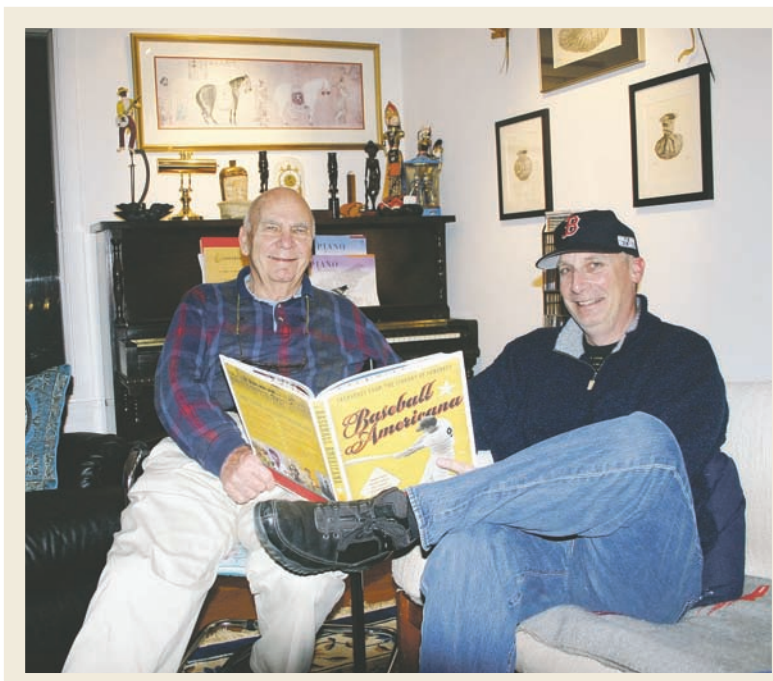
# Take me out to the Library of Congress



## Baseball Photographs compiled in a new book by Lexington's Harry Katz



{just in time for the holidays}



Left: Author Harry Katz (right) shares some his favorite photos from the book with his dad Arthur Katz (left) at their home in Lexington.

Images courtesy of Harper Collins Publishers and the Library of Congress.

### An interview with Harry Katz

Interview conducted and edited by Jeri Zeder

Growing up in Lexington, Harry Katz was bitten by two bugs: history and baseball. So it was a natural for him to combine these passions in a stunning new book, *Baseball Americana: Treasures from the Library of Congress* (Smithsonian Books, 2009). With a foreword by columnist and baseball enthusiast George F. Will, this artfully designed, richly detailed pictorial history contains 350 images, many never before published, culled by Katz and his four co-authors from 4,000 to 5,000 baseball-related photos. Katz is the former head curator of the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. He recently spoke with *Colonial Times Magazine* contributor Jeri Zeder.

JZ: How did you decide what images were going to make the cut?

Harry Katz: Each image speaks at different levels of meaning, either about the history of the game, or about a character, or an event. I wanted people to turn every page and sort of gasp.

One of the early images was a fantastic photographic portrait of a Native American, Jim Thorpe [1913]. Thorpe is renowned as one of the great Olympic athletes of all time, but he had a good career as a professional baseball player. In this close-up, he looks like such a proud athlete. It's an iconic image of a baseball player in the prime of his life, at the top of his game.

Another example: Babe Ruth being knocked unconscious in 1924 after running into a concrete outfield wall while chasing a foul ball. He was unconscious for five minutes. Then he got up and continued the game. And this was first game of a doubleheader, so he played another game! It runs counter to our contemporary image of Babe Ruth. He hit all those home runs, but we don't have a sense of him being a gamer, as somebody who's going to run after a foul ball with all that enthusiasm.

We have Jackie Mitchell [1931], the women pitcher who struck out Murderers' Row. We've got Octavius Catto [1871], an early civil rights leader and baseball player, who was gunned down by anti-black activists during an early civil rights march. These little pieces of American history that we weren't familiar with just stood out in our journey through the book.

JZ: *Baseball Americana* homes in on fascinating historical details. For example, I learned that people in the 1700s worried about the

### Author of *Baseball Americana*.

wholesomeness of baseball for children, and that technological changes, like the construction of the ball, influenced styles of play. What previously unknown details does your book reveal?

HK: Most people still think that baseball was invented in 1839 by Abner Doubleday, so the fact that we bring the history of baseball back to 1787, which is when the Constitution was created and signed, is astonishing. I think this is probably the first big trade publication that really represents that.

There were no great household names from baseball until these images were disseminated, until there were baseball cards in the 1880s that were distributed in cigarette packs like the ones we show in our book. We were trying to show how the game was spread, how it became embedded in American culture, how Americans came to recognize the players, recognize the teams, how they came to be fans of the sport.

JZ: What's your favorite image in *Baseball Americana*, and why?

HK: The factory workers from Indiana by Lewis Hine. Hine was the photographer for the National Child Labor Committee around the turn of the 20th Century. The committee was part of the reform movement trying to get kids into schools and out of factories and other terrible working situations. The kids in this picture are probably all 14 through 16 or 17. Half of them are smoking pipes, and half of them look like just the toughest street urchins you've ever seen. One of them, in fact, is holding a rifle. This was probably pretty typical some of the early amateur and industrial teams. Baseball was a rowdy, unruly sport in the late 19th century, but was also the one respite from the unrelenting hardship and the labor that was the reality of their daily lives.

JZ: Your book really drove home for me how ubiquitous baseball is in an American childhood. It triggered memories I haven't thought of in years. Was that part of your intention, to provide a lens through which readers might see their own lives?

HK: I wanted to get back to the game on the field. I wanted to get back to the smell of the grass and dirt, hear the crack of the bat. You know, eating popcorn, eating a hot dog, and feeling the passion that you felt as a kid. That's exactly what this book is about.

JZ: Jeri Zeder lives in Lexington. To see the Library of Congress's entire digitized catalog of baseball images, visit [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).



The ball team of child glassworkers in Indiana, 1908. Photo by Lewis Hine, who worked with the National Child Labor Committee to document the plight of child laborers and seek reform at the turn of the 20th Century.



Right: Photographers at the Polo Grounds, New York, Bain News Service, 1914.



Above: Food vendors, Ebbets Field, New York, October 6, 1920. Hot dogs and lemonade for sale.



Above: Jim Thorpe, Olympics legend and outfielder for the New York Giants, at the Polo Grounds, 1913.



Left: The New York Female Giants (aka, the Bloomer Girls), 1913. In this photo: batter Miss Ryan and catcher Miss McCullum.