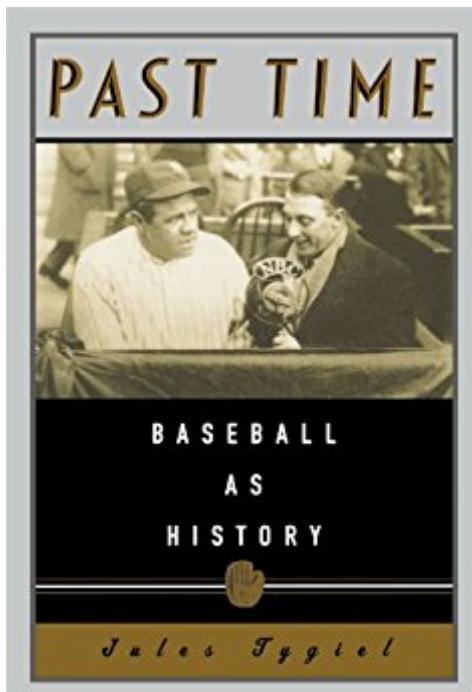


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# Past Time: Baseball As History



## Synopsis

Few writers know more about baseball's role in American life than Jules Tygiel. In *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*, Tygiel penned a classic work, a landmark book that towers above most writing about the sport. Now he ranges across the last century and a half in an intriguing look at baseball as history, and history as reflected in baseball. In *Past Time*, Tygiel gives us a seat behind home plate, where we catch the ongoing interplay of baseball and American society. We begin in New York in the 1850s, where pre-Civil War nationalism shaped the emergence of a "national pastime." We witness the true birth of modern baseball with the development of its elaborate statistics--the brainchild of English-born reformer, Henry Chadwick. Chadwick, Tygiel writes, created the sport's "historical essence" and even imparted a moral dimension to the game with his concepts of "errors" and "unearned" runs. Tygiel offers equally insightful looks at the role of rags-to-riches player-owners in the formation of the upstart American League and he describes the complex struggle to establish African-American baseball in a segregated world. He also examines baseball during the Great Depression (when Branch Rickey and Larry MacPhail saved the game by perfecting the farm system, night baseball, and radio broadcasts), the ironies of Bobby Thomson's immortal "shot heard 'round the world," the rapid relocation of franchises in the 1950s and 1960s, and the emergence of rotisserie leagues and fantasy camps in the 1980s. In *Past Time*, Jules Tygiel provides baseball history with a difference. Instead of a pitch-by-pitch account of great games, in this groundbreaking book, the field is American history and baseball itself is the star.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* and the follow-up *Jackie Robinson Reader*, Jules Tygiel focused his historian's eye on what was arguably baseball's most stunning single event. Dissecting it from every angle, he followed its consequences through the weft of the national fabric in a pair of consummate, readable, and marvelously entertaining books that painted an arresting portrait of a remarkable man and his remarkable ordeal. In *Past Time* Tygiel widens his focus to turn his considerable narrative and interpretive skills loose on the broader tapestry of the game itself. The result is a superb collection of essays on American history filtered through the national pastime's lens. "If there is a unifying theme"--and there certainly is--"it is that while the game of baseball itself has changed minimally since its origins, the context and format in which Americans have absorbed and appreciated the game have dramatically shifted." Drawing on his encyclopedic knowledge of the game, Tygiel uses the game as his doorway for entry into--and airing out--several rooms of the American past. Though the nine essays that make up *Past Time* reflect the game's nine innings and are presented chronologically, they are each entities unto themselves and can be read in any order. Rarely stepping onto the playing field, they avoid the mushiness and rhapsodizing that baseball tends to evoke. Instead, they take provocative looks at the often overlooked--like why statistics hold the game together, and why holding the game together was crucial to an America emerging from the Civil War--and fresh looks at old warhorses like baseball and the Depression era, baseball and civil rights, and baseball and America's post-World War II geographical shift. The final "inning" examines such recent obsessions as rotisserie leagues and fantasy camps, and the chapter on Bobby Thompson's famed home run and how the ways we would experience the game in the early years of the Cold War would change is thoroughly absorbing. But, then, so is the rest of *Past Time*. It has you wishing for extra "innings." --Jeff Silverman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Baseball, with its long, rich, well-documented history remains a powerful vehicle for exploring the American past." In this goal Tygiel fails, but readers will likely stick around beyond the seventh-inning stretch nevertheless. In this collection of nine essays, he's gathered energetic and cogent discussions of the game. "The National Game" shows how the earlier version of baseball played in New York became the basis for the modern game, not because of "its inherent attributes" but because of the ability of its originators to incorporate emerging social attributes into the evolving game. "Adjusting to the New Order" fascinates with a portrait of Henry Chadwick, the inventor of the stat, a man who saw box scores as "a series of mini-morality plays." Perhaps the finest, "The

*Homes of the Braves*" explores how the movement of teams in the 1950s and 1960s, starting with the Braves' move from Boston to Milwaukee in 1953, reflected America's changing demographics. In each essay, Tygiel demonstrates how baseball has reacted to the real world, but his tone often grows stiff, academic or curmudgeonly as he makes his points. When he turns back to the game, however--whether to illustrate the bitter feud between Branch Rickey and Larry McPhail or to relate the origins and madness of Rotisserie Baseball--his prose gets more casual and lively. In these moments, he's not a professor but a fan--and the shift itself is a reward, for it mirrors that moment when each of us reaches his or her seat and the world of work dissolves in the realization, "I'm at the game." 32 halftones. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is written by a history professor. But it is not dry or boring--not by a long shot. Jules Tygiel writes with lucid and energetic prose. He looks at how baseball and the country grew up together, from the 1850's to the year 2000, when the book was published. This is a very unique take on the National Pastime. It is a highly intelligent but also highly accessible book that should prove to be highly enjoyable to those who have an interest in baseball history.

Thoroughly enjoyable for the baseball fan or social historian. More about society than baseball as a game, uses "America's pastime" as a way to explore aspects of America not often treated and certainly not treated from this perspective.

My son had to read this for a college class. He loved it and has read it a few times for pleasure too.

Tygiel is brilliant, as usual. His bringing in historical and socio-cultural developments as introduction/explanation for important events in the history of baseball is carefully thought out and expressed beautifully.

Quick read; each chapter can indeed be read as a stand alone (as stated) and doesn't need to be read front to back.

This is an interesting look at history through the changes surrounding America's favorite pastime. Good gift for a baseball history fan.

I enjoyed this book a lot and have now used it in two book clubs. As Jules notes in his introduction, this is more a social history than baseball as such, which means that I learned a lot about what was going on in the larger society through the lens of baseball.

Arrived as promised

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