

The Troy Trojans: A Forgotten Part of New York's Pastime

Jack Fenty, Marist '20



America's national pastime, baseball, has roots in Troy, a small city outside of Albany, New York. While most New Yorkers tend to remember or at least acknowledge the history and presence of two former Major League Baseball teams in New York, the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers, people tend to not know that Major League Baseball was once present in Troy.

The first record of organized professional baseball in Troy was after the American Civil War.¹ The Troy Haymakers joined the first professional baseball league, the National Association, in 1871.² The Haymakers played locally; the biggest rival of the team was the Brooklyn based, New York Mutuals. After fighting for a bid to join the National League of Major League Baseball in 1876, the Haymakers were denied. Finally, in 1878 the National League accepted the Troy-based team, which then changed its name from the Troy Haymakers to the Troy Trojans....and just like that, Troy was home to Major League Baseball.³

The Troy Trojans joined the growing Major League Baseball league in 1879, but unfortunately for Troy residents, the team was removed from the league after only four short seasons.⁴ The first reason the Trojans were removed was the lack of the success of the franchise over its four-year existence. In the inaugural season the Trojans finished last in the National League division, the

¹ Ray Kim, "When Troy Was a Major-League City," *www.empireone.net*, accessed February 5, 2019, <http://www.empireone.net/~musicman/troyball.html>.

² IBID.

³ IBID.

⁴ IBID.

Trojans record consisted of a whopping 19 wins, 56 losses, and 2 ties.⁵ The next season, the 1880 season, was the most successful in the franchise's existence, the Trojans recorded 41 wins and 42 losses.⁶ In 1881 the Trojans finished with 39 wins, 45 losses, and 1 tie.⁷ Lastly, in the franchise's final season ever, the Troy Trojans finished with 35 wins, 48 losses, and 2 ties.⁸ Over the franchise's four-year existence, the Trojans had an overall record of 134 wins and 191 losses. A lack of success for a brand-new franchise is not out of the ordinary, which indicates another factor is the main cause Major League Baseball left Troy.

Throughout the Trojans' existence in Major League Baseball attendance was a major problem. It seemed that the hardworking citizens of Troy did not want to go nor did they have the time to invest in watching their home town club. Over the franchise's four years, the Trojans had three different home ballparks.⁹ In 1879, the Trojans played at Putnam Grounds, which now exists as a local park in downtown Troy.¹⁰ In their next two seasons, the Trojans played their games at the Haymakers' Grounds and then played the last season across the Hudson River at the Troy Ball Club's Ground.¹¹ While it was not at one of their home ballparks, the Trojans played the Worcester Worcesters, also known as the Ruby Legs, in the lowest recorded attendance in Major League Baseball history.¹² That game, on September 28th, 1882 had a total of six fans watching... a record that will never be beaten.¹³

Although the Trojans never had a season record over .500, the franchise had some talented players throughout its four years. Some players were even talented enough to become Hall of Famers later in their careers. The most well-known player for the Trojans was Tim Keefe. Keefe began his Major League Baseball career there in 1880 and played with the Trojans until the franchise was no more. Once the Troy franchise was disbanded, Keefe played for the New York Metropolitan the next season. Keefe would go on to win two World Series and would be inducted to the Hall of Fame in 1964.¹⁴ Along with the franchise, most of the players on the 1879 team were new to the league. In total, four future of Hall of Famers started their careers with the Troy Trojans.

After four losing seasons, Major League Baseball left the small city of Troy... On September 22, 1882 the following appeared in the New York Times,

⁵ "Troy Trojans Team History & Encyclopedia," *BaseballReference.com*, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/TRT/>.

⁶ IBID.

⁷ IBID.

⁸ IBID.

⁹ "Troy Trojans Attendance, Stadiums, and Park Factors," *BaseballReference.com*, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/TRT/attend.shtml>.

¹⁰ IBID.

¹¹ IBID.

¹² Steve Wulf, "Remembering the long-ago major league history of Troy, N.Y.," *ESPN.com*, accessed February 9, 2019, http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/16292570/remembering-long-ago-major-league-history-troy-ny.

¹³ IBID.

¹⁴ "Troy Trojans Team History & Encyclopedia," *BaseballReference.com*, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/TRT/>.

*“The Executive Committee of the National League of professional base-ball players met today, and accepted the resignations from membership in the league of Worcester and Troy clubs. Applications for admission to membership from the Metropolitan and the Philadelphia Clubs were recovered, and will be acted upon in December.”*¹⁵

It seemed the record low attendance of six people at the Worcester and Troy game did not go over well for Major League Baseball in the end.

Unfortunately, much of the Troy Trojans history has disappeared, but one impact the franchise had is now seen across the country in San Francisco. The city of Troy is credited for becoming the birth place of the San Francisco Giants. The New York Gothams took the vacant spot in the National League in 1883, three years later the Gothams then would be renamed the Giants. The New York Giants then became the San Francisco Giants in 1958 and the rest is history. Today, in Troy, the only real remembrance of the team is a granite plaque in the middle of Knickerbocker Park honoring the legacy of the franchise.

Major League Baseball will most likely never call Troy, New York home ever again, but the impact and legacy the Trojans provided for the small city and Major League Baseball should not be forgotten.

¹⁵ *“NewsPaperarchives.com*, accessed February 12th, 2019, <https://newspaperarchive.com/new-york-times-sep-23-1882-p-2/>