

INVENTORY

Collection 105

John Wesley Coombs Collection

**The Brick Store Museum
Kennebunk, Maine**

**Compiled by Rosalind Magnuson
Archivist
November, 2011**

COLLECTION 105

John Wesley Coombs Collection

This collection of photographs and memorabilia of John Wesley Coombs was given to the museum by Theresa C. Wentworth and her late husband Donald E. Wentworth. It consists of many photographs, baseball memorabilia, CDs, scrapbooks, baseball statistics and clippings about John W. Coombs.

John Wesley "Jack" Coombs was born in La Grand, Iowa on November 18, 1882. In 1887 the family moved back to Maine, where his parents had been born. His father was a blacksmith, and John had two brothers and a sister. He was six feet tall, strong and tireless, traits which served him well as a pitcher. During the summers in high school he pitched in semi-professional leagues. In 1910 he married Mary Russ of Palestine, Texas. Until he died he maintained a home in Palestine.

He graduated from Colby College in Waterville in 1906, where he was a chemistry major, and was a member of the baseball, football, track and tennis teams. The baseball field at Colby is named in his honor. Three weeks after graduation he joined the Philadelphia Athletics in the American League. Here he obtained one of his nicknames, "Colby Jack," after the college he had attended. He also played for the Brooklyn Robins and the Detroit Tigers. In 1910, which many consider to be his finest year, he won three games against the Chicago Cubs, as the Athletics defeated the Cubs in the World Series. He set several records which stand to this day, including pitching the longest game in major league history. His other nickname, Iron Man Jack, was a result of the game.

In the spring of 1913 he contracted typhoid fever, probably becoming infected while traveling during the opening weeks of the season. He was hospitalized and his weight fell from 185 pounds down to 140. The fact that he was in suburb condition probably aided in his recovery. He was determined to come back to the team, and returned on August 4, 1913. However, on September 1st he collapsed, typhoid was discovered in his spine, and he was put in a full body cast. In early December he left the hospital in a back brace, with orders to spend the winter resting and regaining weight. He returned to the Athletics the next season, and resumed pitching on September 28th.

1914 turned into a season of turmoil, as the new Federal League was in the throes of birth. In Coombs case he was without work because his manager, Connie Mack, wrongly assumed that Coombs was aiding the Federal League, which folded that year.

In 1915 Jack Coombs began pitching for the Brooklyn Robins. Brooklyn was an immature team, but Coombs helped the team win third place in the league. He pitched for three more seasons for Brooklyn, leading them to the World Series in 1916. He served as the manager for the Philadelphia Phillies for the 1919 season, and played for the Detroit Tigers for 1920.

In 1929 he began coaching for Duke University, which he retired from in 1952. He had the good fortune to coach his nephew, Raymond Franklin "Bobby" Coombs, from 1931 to 1933. Many of his players at Duke went on to compete in the major leagues, and Duke named the baseball field

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after him. In 1937 he published *Baseball - Individual Play and Team Strategy*, a well written tome on Coombs favorite subject.

John Wesley Coombs died of a heart attack at his home in Palestine, Texas in April, 1957. He was never elected to the baseball hall of fame in Cooperstown, but was elected to several regional ones.

The collection is housed in five boxes, a notebook of clippings arranged numerically, two CDs and thirteen transparencies. They have been given the number 2009.010.0001-0317. The transparencies are housed with other transparencies in the collections. The first two boxes of photographs have been selectively printed. The third box is memorabilia, and the fourth box holds scrapbooks, etc. The box marked "Box 6" is the original newspaper clippings from which the notebook of the same was made, and should be used with care.

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Boxes 1 & 2

Photographs of John Coombs, including photographs of his family, his homes in Maine and Palestine, Texas, Colby classmates, hunting trips into northern Maine with friends, early team photographs, and team photographs with the Athletics and Brooklyn Robins. There are several folders of unidentified photographs. The last folder is of an exhibit of Coombs memorabilia.

Box 3

Folder 1: Seven cartoons that ran in the Cleveland (?) Plain Dealer in 1910.

Folder 2: News clipping from *The Campanile*, 191, about Jack Coombs.
Copy of articles from around the country about baseball, 1917.

Folder 3: Duke University Alumni Register, May, 1932. Jack Coombs is mentioned as the baseball coach of the team.

Folder 4: Bank statements for 1925 and 1925 for the Kennebunkport Collegians baseball team. Included is a statement from Edwards and Walker Company to Mrs. G. H. Walker of Kennebunkport for two Louisville Slugger bats.

Folder 5: Kennebunkport Collegians - receipts and bills from various local entities from 1923 to 1925. The reader will get a good sense of the time and effort that went into a baseball team in the 1920s.

Folder 6: Letter from R. S. (Bob) Coe to John W. Coombs in Sept., 1924 regarding Coombs signing with Princeton.

Folder 7: Story from the Palestine Herald-Press about Jack Coombs. N.d.
Story about Charlie Dwyer, Coombs catcher at Colby, n.d.
Story on Jack Coombs, n.d.

Folder 8: Program from the *Twenty-first Anniversary of the Cedar Park Driving Club*. Connie Mack gave one of the toasts, and John Combs (Coombs) was a guest.

Folder 9: Brochure from The East Texas National Bank of Palestine, Texas, 1954, in which John W. Coombs is listed as a Director.

Folder 10: *Reach's Official Score Book*. Harry Wright's System. Pub. By A. J. Reach Co., Philadelphia, PA, n.d. Filled in; Coombs is listed as playing. Kennebunk, Brunswick, Lewiston, Kennebunkport, Portland, York Harbor, etc. were the teams playing.

- Folder 11: The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY, Silver Anniversary Edition – 1964.
- Folder 12: *Public Ledger* Sports Magazine, Nov. 29, 1914.
 Duke University Spring Sports Schedule, 1949. Coombs is listed as the coach the baseball team.
 Score card for 1926 between the Kennebunkport and Portland teams. Coombs was the manager (?).
- Folder 13: *Syracuse Baseball Club* card for Mrs. Raymond Coombs, c. 1934
 Telegram dated 6/15/24 to John Coombs regarding a death in the family from Catherine Thomas
 Telegram dated 6/15/24 to John Coombs regarding a death in the family from W. J. McMahan
 Letter to Raymond Coombs from Lenox D. Baker, M.D. regarding death of widow of Jack Coombs dated August 25, 1965
- Folder 14: Official Rand McNally map of New England from *Chamberlin's Automobile Service*, Kennebunk, c. 1923
Map of Northern Maine Specially Adapted to the Uses of Lumbermen and Sportsmen, Compiled by Lucius Hubbard, Cambridge, MA, c. 1909
- Folder 15: Letter from Geo. E. McLinn to John Lapp dated Nov. 25, 1914 regarding photos
- Folder 16: *The Leviathan*, June 1913. P. 5 mentions Coombs as the pitcher.
The Leviathan, December, 1913. P. 4 mentions coombs missing the World Series.
- Folder 17: Copies of newspaper clippings related to Raymond "Bobby" Coombs, n.d.
 Copies of letter from Miss Mary Rose Kingsley to Bobby Coombs, August 17, 1939
 Copies of letters from Bobby Coombs fans
 Copy of Bobby Coombs baseball career from 1933 – 1946
 Partial genealogy of the Coombs family
 Copy of "*Bobby Coombs on the Mound*" by Norm Walker
 Bill and Peggy's Reflection of Bobby Coombs 1908-1991
- Folder 18: Copies of clippings about Jack Coombs form the "Kennebunk and Vicinity" section of the *Eastern Star*, 1910-1914
- Folder 19: Assorted clippings from the many scrapbooks Agatha Coombs, wife of Bobby Coombs, put together chronicling his career
- Folder 20: Two commemorative programs from "Coombs Day," June 20, 1910 with picture of 1906 Colby team and official scoring system
- Folder 21: Copies of news clippings of John Combs

Copy of a poem "Jack" Coombs' Victory over "Christy: Matthewson, Oct. 17, 1911
Copy from the *Eastern Star* mentioning Jack Coombs, n.d.

Folder 22: *The Colby Echo*, December 12, 1902, December 19, 1902, and January 23, 1907

Folder 23: Delta Epsilon songs, 71st Annual Convention
71st Annual Convention Delta Upsilon Literary Exercises
71st Annual Convention Delta Upsilon Banquet
Two copies of the *Official Score Card World's Champion Series Morgan, Bender, and Coombs vs. The Martins Ferry Fans*, Martins Ferry, Ohio, December 15, 1911

Folder 24: Young's Ocean Pier, Atlantic City, NJ, advertising Jack Coombs, pitching hero of the World's Champion Athletics in a Musical Sketch

Folder 25: Program of the *Dinner of the American Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, Champions of the World by the Citizens of Philadelphia*, November 5, 1910 at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia to celebrate winning the World Series
Two receipts signed by John W. Coombs and F. H. Coombs, c. 1906, from the Ticonic National Bank
Calling card for John Wesley Coombs
Postcard from the Granite Savings Bank and Trust Company, Barre, Vermont, noting receipt of \$32.50 for John Coombs
Official Score Book for the Tenth Annual Championship at Waterville, May 14, 1904 in which Coombs is listed as participating
Schedule card of the Athletics, 1907
Photograph of a woman and The Mystery

Folder 26: Souvenir program from opening day at Shibe Park, April 12, 1909. This was the home field of the Athletics, and they beat Boston on opening day.

Box 4

Spaulding's Official Athletic Library Base Ball Guide, published by the American Sports Publishing Co., New York, c. 1912.
Spaulding's Official Athletic Library Base Ball Guide, published by the American Sports Publishing Co., New York, c. 1908. No cover.
LaJoie's Official Base Ball Guide, compiled by Napoleon LaJoie and M. A. Bobrick, published by American League Publishing Company, Cleveland, Ohio, 1907.
Spaulding's Official Basé Ball Score Book, published by A. G. Spaulding & Bros., New York, c. 1926.
Notebook of John Coombs, c. 1900.
Against the Tide by Rev. Walter M. S. Lowell, published by Leonard Publishing Company, Albany and New York, c. 1892. The first few pages were used as a scrapbook by John Coombs.
CD – Shibe Park panorama 2009.010.0316

CD – Kennebunk's Big Leaguers 2009.010.0317

Four envelopes for developing pictures belonging to John Coombs from Palestine, Texas
Spaulding's Official Athletic Library Base Ball Guide, published by the American Sports
Publishing Co., New York, c. 1910. Missing the first 80 pages.

Nellie Burton's scrapbook of the feats of John Coombs at Colby College, c. 1906-1906.
Included are some report cards, newspaper clippings, copies of flyers, track meet
programs, baseball schedules, etc.

Scrapbook of photographs taken of and by John Coombs, some in Palestine, Texas.
Thirteen transparencies, one of the American Base Ball Club of Philadelphia Dinner,
1910 (with transparencies)

Rosalind Magnuson

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November 17, 2011