



Tinker to Evers to Chance: The Chicago Cubs and the Dawn of Modern America

David Rapp

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Their names were chanted, crowed, and cursed. Alone they were a shortstop, a second baseman, and a first baseman. But together they were an unstoppable force. Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, and Frank Chance came together in rough-and-tumble early twentieth-century Chicago and soon formed the defensive core of the most formidable team in big league baseball, leading the Chicago Cubs to four National League pennants and two World Series championships from 1906 to 1910. At the same time, baseball was transforming from small-time diversion into a nationwide sensation. Americans from all walks of life became infected with “baseball fever,” a phenomenon of unprecedented enthusiasm and social impact. The national pastime was coming of age.

Tinker to Evers to Chance examines this pivotal moment in American history, when baseball became the game we know today. Each man came from a different corner of the country and brought a distinctive local culture with him: Evers from the Irish-American hothouse of Troy, New York; Tinker from the urban parklands of Kansas City, Missouri; Chance from the verdant fields of California’s Central Valley. The stories of these early baseball stars shed unexpected light not only on the evolution of baseball and on the enthusiasm of its players and fans all across America, but also on the broader convulsions transforming the US into a confident new industrial society. With them emerged a truly national culture.

This iconic trio helped baseball reinvent itself, but their legend has largely been relegated to myths and barroom trivia. David Rapp’s engaging history resets the story and brings these men to life again, enabling us to marvel anew at their feats on the diamond. It’s a rare look at one of baseball’s first dynasties in action.

Tinker to Evers to Chance: The Chicago Cubs and the Dawn of Modern America **Details**

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Author : David Rapp

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From Reader Review Tinker to Evers to Chance: The Chicago Cubs and the Dawn of Modern America for online ebook

Eli says

2018 is a tough summer for Orioles fans to actually watch baseball. Next best thing is reading a good book about baseball. I thoroughly enjoyed this bio on the famous Cubs infield.

Roger Smitter says

David Rapp provides some insights into how three Chicago Cubs players made baseball America's game. Johnny Evers, Joe Tinker, and Frank Chance were three infielders who made the double play (getting two outs in from one grounder) a unique quality of baseball. The phrase "Tinker, to Evers, to Chance" has become one of unique qualities of baseball.

The three infielders each get a chapter about the growing up and becoming major league players. But the narrative goes well beyond history. Rapp gives us an insight to, as he defines it, "a tale of how baseball came to capture its followers and hold them in such staunch allegiance at the turn of the turn of the national pastime" (xiii). The three players helped make baseball a "respectable" part of society (p. 7). He goes so far to ways that the three infielders made baseball more than just a game. They made sports reporting a domain of journalism.

The author links the rise of the Cubs and baseball with the birth of Chicago's emergence as a formidable city. (A bit of an overstatement—but worth reading).

Chapter 7 tells us about the games of the 1907 World Series and chapter 9 tells us how the "curse of the Cubs" player out for 100 years.

Cubs fans—and baseball fans in general—will enjoy this book.

Brina says

It is a month into baseball season and there is nothing like watching or reading about baseball to give me a tonic for my doldrums. What is surprising is that it took me until the end of the first third of the year to read my first baseball book of the year. I am looking to remedy that pace and might focus on baseball themed books for the rest of the year, but more on my reading issues later. For my entire life until two years ago I was inundated with stories of ballplayers Tinker, Evers, and Chance who lead the Cubs during their glory years a century ago. Their names continue to live on in a poem that had been ironically penned by a rival sports writer, yet allowed their names to be on the forefront of American minds. David Rapp, who is a

reporter for the Evansville News and as a huge of a Cubs fan as I am, has finally given the public a book about these immortal ballplayers, and through his extensive research, Rapp did not disappoint.

The early 20th century saw a United States in transition. I have always enjoyed studying the era between 1875 and 1910 because these thirty five years changed the United States from a fledgling country to a modern nation. Baseball was no different from the rest of the country at large. First officially played in 1869, by 1900 the game had emerged with a National League and a plethora of amateur or minor leagues formed in hamlets and burghs around the country. By 1900 the league had its eight original member teams in place and had largely cleaned itself of dirty ballplayers, making the game a preferred entertainment for families. During the decade, a rival American League had formed, and following the 1904 Peace Agreement between the two, the first World Series was played between the Boston Pilgrims and Pittsburgh Pirates. Yet, much animosity remained in the National League, especially from baseball lifers who still saw the American league as upstarts rather than working in concert to expand the game to the national pastime it is today. Led by long time New York Giants manager John McGraw, many in the National League wished that the American League did not exist and refused to play in this new World Series. The fall classic nearly disappeared before it got started, and it would need a new, clean, modern brand of baseball to lead it forward into the 20th century.

Enter the Chicago Nationals managed by Frank Selee. Still calling the west side grounds home, the Chicago National League Ball Club played a counterpoint to New York, beginning a rivalry between the cities that still exists to this day. By 1906, the city was thirty five years past its horrendous fire, and rebuilt in modernity to be the second largest city in the nation. Yet, the team had not won a championship since its glory days on Cap Anson in the 1880s and the city was hungry for a championship, seeing the Giants and their dirty brand of baseball win nearly every year. Frank Selee scoured the country for young men who embodied the national game and put together a prized infield with three men from diverse backgrounds: Johnny Evers, Jr from Troy, New York; Joe Tinker from Kansas City, Missouri; and Frank Chance from far away Fresno, California. Each was a top amateur in his hometown, earning as much as a \$60 a year on the ball field. The major leagues would be a giant step up in both income and notoriety. The three would go on to play together in a working relationship for the next ten years, and be immortalized in poem form by writer Francis P Adams. Little did anyone associated with the Chicago Nationals know that it would be another 108 years until another championship was brought to the city's north side.

Besides the story of Merkle's boner that delivered the Cubs the 1908 pennant, Rapp interweaves stories of the modernizing of America. In the 1900s, cities were industrializing and people needed a break from the rigors of working in factories. Enter baseball to America's psyche and the advent of Ladies' Days that allowed women to enter games free with a gentleman paying admission. Frank Selee's Cubs teams played a clean brand of baseball that appealed to the masses and averaged 100 games a year. They became the darlings of baseball and changed their name from the Nationals or Colts to the Cubs due to their fleet footed prowess on the ball field. Led by player-manager Chance, Tinker, Evers, and pitcher Three Fingered Brown, the Cubs would finish near or atop the National League between 1906 and 1911, winning four of five pennants. What is astonishing is that Brown logged nearly 300 innings a year, unheard of today, and in this deadball era, trickery on the ball field mattered more than smashing hits out of the park. During this era, a player was considered a slugger if he hit ten home runs. Tinker, Evers, and Chance along with their teammates understood how to win in this time of spitballs, hidden ball tricks, and mind games as well as the best in the game, and won the 1907 and 1908 World Series. The Nationals brought the game from that of an elitist eastern game with European roots to an American game to be enjoyed by all Americans who were entering the industrial and modern age.

The current embodiment of the Cubs, which Rapp notes, has its own sure fire double play combination and is young and won over the hearts of baseball fans. Rather than playing counter to New York, their current national league rival is from glitzy Los Angeles, which was a sleepy village at the time of the Tinker, Evers, and Chance Cubs. Yet, like their 1908 counterparts, the 2016 edition of the Cubs won over the hearts of _____

American baseball fans in a World Series for the ages. David Rapp has given the 1906-11 Cubs their due, writing as much about baseball as the social and economic climate of the era, highlighting a nation in transition to becoming a modern powerhouse that it is today. Through his extensive research, Rapp has given baseball historians a joy to read.

4.5 stars

Andrew Campbell says

Mr. Rapp resurrects a bygone game, corrects a bit of history, and reintroduces us to characters lost to memory. I will forever imagine what may have become of the widow Selee.

Brian L. says

The intertwining of history and the game of baseball was handled well. A great read for any baseball fan!

Chris Jaffe says

It's OK. I have no serious issues with it, but it never came alive for me.

Rapp knows his stuff - up to a point, but not beyond that. He has the general outline. But he'll make errors, like referring to Hall of Fame pitcher Vic Willis as "Fred Willis."

Keith Herrell says

Interesting look at the lives behind the "Tinker to Evers to Chance" verse. I enjoy reading about the path to fame -- not just the fame itself -- and this book delivered in the case of all 3: one from the East, one from the Midwest and one from the West. Also doubles as a history of the Chicago Cubs in the early 20th century.

Greg Knussmann says

I bought the book because the author is a good friend of mine, and I skimmed through it when I first got it in April so I could give feedback to my good friend, but I read the book cover to cover because it's interesting.

These days leading up to the All-Star break, a perfect time it seemed to me - Basketball over, Hockey over (Go Caps!), Football over, ... - to hunker down with some baseball lit.

The narrative captures the changing social mores of a maturing nation as viewed through the emergence of baseball (then "base ball") as a sport that could channel part of their hopes and dreams.

If you're a fan of baseball or just a fan of human life, check out this read this summer. The interweaving of the visceral side of baseball action throughout keeps this great, but informative, reading.
