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IT IS IRONIC that the National League itself was partly responsible for the formation of its first successful rival, the American Association. By the early 'eighties the League had solved its most pressing financial problems and was proving that professional baseball could be a successful business operation. With this example before them, it was only natural that others should try to come into the business.

The League also opened the way unintentionally for competition by failing to place teams in several important cities, "all with populations well educated to" baseball, who were "compelled to be content with a few games annually between amateur and co-operative teams." Besides, old animosities toward the League still rankled in some of these communities. Ever since expelling the Athletics and the Mutuals in 1876 the League had stayed out of New York and Philadelphia. There had been trouble when the old St. Louis Browns had resigned from the League in 1877, and their successors remained in bad grace because of their penchant for playing quarter ball on Sundays and for selling beer in the park. Louisville, forced to quit the League in 1877 because of financial difficulty, still was suspect in the eyes of the League. A game booked with Harry Wright's Red Sox in 1881 was cancelled by the Sox after it was learned that Louisville had inadvertently played a team with an expelled National Leaguer in its lineup.

The most recent club to part company with the League, Cincinnati, was also the most bitter toward it. Oliver Perry Caylor, sports editor of the Enquirer, had denounced the League's "outrageous proceedings" in expelling Cincinnati, and warned that his favorites would take the lead in forming a rival association. "Anything to beat Boss Hulbert" was the attitude in the city.

League or no League, baseball was very much alive in these localities. In St. Louis the Reds, champions of the League Alliance in 1877, were members of the International Association during 1878. With the organi-
zation of the Brown Stockings as a co-operative nine in 1879 from the remnants of the Reds and the old Browns, St. Louis was ready for a new baseball role. An active participant in these developments was Alfred H. Spink, who later recorded, in a book on baseball, how he helped organize the Sportsman's Park and Club Association at the end of the 1880 season to put the Grand Avenue grounds in shape for playing.

Among Spink's associates was Chris Von der Ahe, a picturesque figure who conducted a saloon and boardinghouse adjacent to the Grand Avenue site. Finding the ball fans good customers at his bar, Chris became interested in baseball "as he might have become interested in pretzels, peanuts or any other incitant to thirst and beer drinking," so he secured the refreshment privileges and eventually purchased the ball club.

To stir up interest, Spink wrote O. P. Caylor in Cincinnati, suggesting that he put together a team, label it with the celebrated name of former days, "Cincinnati Reds," and bring it down to St. Louis for a week-end series in 1881. The series turned out to be very successful, and Spink's idea intensified baseball enthusiasm in the city. Spink brought in other clubs, ranging from "prairie" teams like Dubuque and pickup nines from Chicago to the famous Brooklyn Atlantics and the Akron team, regarded the strongest non-League club in the country. Louisville, too, was keen for baseball. A record crowd of 7000 fans turned out the same year for a game with the Akrons.

In the East, the disgrace of the Mutuals forced New Yorkers to be satisfied with a number of undistinguished semi-pro and amateur clubs—especially since League clubs took their pick of both Mutual and Athletic players when those clubs were expelled. But in September 1880, a new outfit, the New York Metropolitans, destined to cut a figure in the baseball world of the decade, was organized and saw action well into the autumn. In 1881 they played 151 games, the greatest number of matches played by one club against professional nines in one season up until then. Included were 60 with regular League clubs, of which the Mets won 18—a good showing. New Yorkers, anxious for good baseball after the many years following the expulsion of the Mutuals, attended the Mets' games in great numbers; estimated gate receipts for the season were over $30,000.

For several years after their Athletics were cast out by the National League, Philadelphia fans followed several clubs who played under the names "Philadelphias" and "Athletics." The 1881 version of the Athletics, managed by Horace B. Phillips, went all the way to St. Louis at an invitation from Spink, where they played a series before excellent crowds. Stop-overs for games were also made at Louisville and Cincinnati.

Heartened by their successful interchange of games, and sharing
much in common vis-à-vis the League, these clubs were irresistibly thrown together. They were bound to see the advantages of banding together in a more formal relationship, to establish a regular schedule and safeguard their property rights. The movement in this direction was directly precipitated by Cincinnati’s expulsion from the National League in 1880. Hard upon O. P. Caylor’s public threats came Cincinnati’s attempts to form a new league with a liberal policy, including the right of the member clubs to regulate their own admission prices. Her first two efforts, made during the winter of 1880, were unsuccessful. Hulbert supposedly spiked the second of these by sidetracking the Metropolitans and the Washington Club, two possible members of the new association. He persuaded the Metropolitans to join the League Alliance instead, and even though the Washington Club had been expelled from the Alliance, he arranged for its players to be signed by National League teams.

Undaunted by these setbacks, a Colonel Harris, receiver of the bankrupt Cincinnati Club, continued to work toward the formation of a new league. By June 1881 he succeeded in persuading a coterie of Cincinnati baseball men to pledge money to see Cincinnati either restored to the League or primed as bellwether for a new association. Among them was Justus Thorner, ex-president of the Cincinnati Club, who was also connected with J. G. Sohn & Company, a brewing concern.

These maneuvers were accompanied by jeers from the pro-League press. “By all means form an anti-League Association, with Cincinnati, St. Louis, and a few other villages as members,” scoffed the Chicago Tribune. “The League would be glad to get rid of some dead wood.” Another League defender asserted that despite “faults in its management,” Hulbert’s organization was the only one capable of controlling professional players and compelling “honest work.” It was therefore “nonsense” to think of forming new leagues and “useless to compete further” with the National League “in the race for the control of the professional class of ball players.” Convinced that a new league would never materialize, pro-League newspapers disparaged its prospective members as “paper clubs.”

Such criticism did not stop the new movement, though. Records differ in minor detail, but the evidence points to Horace B. Phillips, manager of the Philadelphias, as the man responsible for instigating the meeting at Pittsburgh, October 10, 1881, which led to the formation of the American Association. After consulting with Justus Thorner, Phillips sent postcards calling a meeting of likely clubs, but then forgot about the whole matter. He was reportedly having some trouble with his
players, who decided he was making too much money and deposed him as manager; whereupon he quit baseball in disgust.

The only people to heed Phillips's summons were the Cincinnati promoters, still ready and willing to make another attempt at a new league. Finding themselves alone in Pittsburgh, Thorner, Caylor, and Frank Wright of the Enquirer, whom they had brought with them, met Al Pratt, a bartender and baseball "crank," while they were walking about the town. Pratt put them in touch with Harmer Denny McKnight, local businessman and baseball enthusiast. McKnight was a college graduate who had been a bookkeeper in a Pittsburgh bank before he established his own iron manufacturing business. He had also been head of the Allegheny Club during its tenure with the old International Association. These few men then shrewdly turned the unsuccessful Pittsburgh meeting to good advantage by sending telegrams to prominent non-League clubs. The messages were worded in such a way as to give the impression that each absentee was the only one missing from the meeting! The ruse worked. Favorable replies came in, and a second meeting was arranged for November 2 in Cincinnati, where the American Association was actually created. St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville, the Brooklyn Atlantics, and the Alleghenys of Pittsburgh were admitted at once as charter members of the Association. Denny McKnight was chosen president, and J. H. Pank, who was also secretary and treasurer of the Kentucky Malting Company—"a mammoth institution in Louisville"—was the vice president. Jimmy Williams, former executive of the old International Association, became secretary and treasurer.

At first the new Association was not completely successful in gaining a foothold in Philadelphia and New York, the important Eastern cities vacated by the National League. Philadelphia was represented at the meeting by two clubs, who refused to consolidate, but the Athletics were finally accepted because they had had the foresight to secure playing grounds. Jim Mutrie, manager of the New York Metropolitans, was also on hand at Cincinnati, but he stayed away from the meeting.

"Truthful James" moved cautiously, because he wanted to discover something about the new organization's policy before committing himself. He depended heavily upon games with League clubs and could not afford to join an organization which might be hostile toward the League. Right after the meeting Mutrie set out for Chicago, where he had a long talk with Hulbert, after which he announced his intention to stay out of the Association. Nevertheless, Mutrie continued his flirtation with the Association, showing up again at its meeting the following spring.

At that session, held in Philadelphia March 13, 1882, Billie Barnie withdrew his Brooklyn Atlantics, pleading lack of funds. The gap was
filled by Baltimore, owned by Harry Vonderhorst, another brewer interested in peddling beer to the patrons of the ball parks. So a six-club circuit was maintained.

The constitution of the Association was patterned after that of the National League. Territorial rights were established, one club to a city. Each club paid $50 dues, and the home team had to guarantee visiting teams $65 for each championship game. However, on Decoration Day, the Fourth of July, or a state holiday, the proceeds were to be divided equally. As in the League, clubs could be expelled for a variety of reasons: failure to finish the schedule or to appear for a game, unless detained by accident; neglecting to give a visiting team its share of the gate receipts, or to pay Association dues; using disqualified players, or playing another team doing so; disobeying orders of the Board of Directors, whose decisions were final and “forever binding”; and violating the constitution or playing rules. The Association also matched the League’s insistence on honest play. On pain of expulsion, clubs were forbidden to allow pool-selling and betting on their grounds or in buildings which they owned or occupied. Association doors were closed to players or managers expelled from the National League for “crooked or dishonest playing or drunkenness.”

In other respects, the Association constitution was more liberal than the League’s. Its clubs could play outside teams and exhibition games with each other on off days. Players released without prejudice were given two weeks’ salary and could sign immediately with any other Association club that wanted them. But the most important policies which set the Association apart from the League were Sunday ball, twenty-five cent admissions, and liquor selling on the grounds—the last hardly surprising in view of the brewery money behind several of the clubs. Finally, the American Association introduced two innovations. The team with the highest percentage of games won, rather than the most victories, was to be acclaimed champion. And the Association used a permanent staff of umpires.

The formation of the American Association brought on the first of numerous trade wars which have characterized baseball history. These wars reflected the American economic scene, where entrepreneurs in many fields of business repeatedly battled each other for control of raw materials and markets. In the process, business has steadily moved in the direction of consolidation and concentration of economic power. The history of baseball reveals the same pattern. Baseball operators, too, waged trade wars for similar objectives—control of ball players (raw materials) and exclusive control of territories (markets). If any-

* Raised to $100 the following year.
thing, baseball has outdone conventional businesses in establishing monolithic power and engaging in monopolistic practices.

The conflict between the League and the Association was not precipitated abruptly. The two rivals even played twenty spring exhibition games with each other, which proved both financially profitable and highly successful in stimulating fan interest. After all, the League had watched other short-lived associations come and go, so it was not unduly alarmed at this latest organization, especially since the Association did not, at first, invade League territory. Nevertheless, the League took prompt steps to make the League Alliance more attractive, no doubt as a precaution against possible inroads by the Association. Yet they hardly meant “war to the knife,” as the Cincinnati Enquirer, with its flair for the dramatic, called them.

Still, it was not long before the knives were unsheathed. The Troy-Wise incident opened the quarrel. Samuel Washington Wise and John “Dasher” Troy, two infielders, no sooner had signed with the Association's Cincinnati and Philadelphia clubs, respectively, than they were persuaded to jump their contracts and join League clubs. Wise went to Boston and Troy to Detroit. Both men had played a few games with the Detroit Nationals the previous season, so the League probably regarded them as its own property. Hulbert added insult to injury with a haughty statement given out in an interview:

The League does not recognize the existence of any Association of ball clubs excepting itself and the League Alliance. . . . I don't care to go into the question of the League's attitude toward the so-called American Association further than to say that it is not likely the League will be awake nights bothering its head about how to protect a body in which it has no earthly interest, and which voluntarily assumed a position of hostility toward the League.

Hulbert evidently chose to interpret the Association's determination to pursue an independent course as “hostility” toward the League, for there is no evidence that the Association had made any attack on the League up to the time of his statement.

The Association reacted angrily. Denny McKnight said that the only conclusion to be drawn was that the League was anxious to break up the American Association, for fear it would become a dangerous rival. Manager Lew Simmons bluntly asked Detroit if it sanctioned stealing players, while O. P. Caylor tried unsuccessfully to coax Wise back to Cincinnati with a letter “in which taffy, entreaty, and bull-dozing were very beautifully blended.” Detroit took the same high and mighty attitude as Hulbert. In a reply to Simmons, it admitted signing Troy,

* See above, page 100.
denied knowledge of the Association's existence, and invited the Athletics to expel the player and seek redress in the courts. Troy himself sanctimoniously announced he did not think it "proper or right to play ball on the Sabbath," and he claimed he did not realize when he signed with the Athletics that he would have to play on Sundays. But the New York Clipper chided League officials for condoning acts which it thought could only lead to the crookedness the League had hitherto punished so severely.

The Association retaliated against the League at its spring meeting in 1882. McKnight had previously charged that the League had committed the "Troy outrage" to provoke the Association into hiring the League's blacklisted and expelled players, in order to turn the press and public against the Association, and he had stated flatly that his organization would "do nothing of the kind." Now, however, the Association decided to allow expelled, suspended, or blacklisted National Leaguers to appeal to its Board of Directors, which could admit them to full Association privileges if it decided injustice had been done. The Association also set up its own satellite system by providing for an Alliance which lesser clubs could join. In a third war measure, the Association agreed to start legal action to recover players lost to the League, taking up one case at a time, and if successful proceeding to the next, expenses to be borne by the entire Association.

Cincinnati made good the threat by appealing to a Massachusetts court for an injunction restraining Wise from playing with Boston and compelling him to return to the Reds, on the plea that his loss was irreparable and could not be calculated financially. This action marks the first time professional baseball went into the courts to settle a dispute. The arguments of the plaintiff and defendant are unavailable, because the bill containing them was taken from the clerk's office by H. B. Abbott, attorney for Cincinnati, and never returned; but the court record shows that the judge refused to grant the restraining order, and Wise remained with Boston. Cincinnati expelled him, and the Athletics had to be content with giving Troy the same treatment.

The Association also changed its mind about playing League clubs. In May 1882 it decided on a policy of "non-intercourse" with League teams, but did not incorporate the rule into the constitution until the following winter. So Cincinnati, winners of the Association pennant, arranged a post-season series with the Chicago White Sox, National League champions, showing that the temptation of lucrative gate receipts was stronger than the need for maintaining the quarantine against the League. Two games had already been played when Denny McKnight stepped in. His threat to expel Cincinnati terminated what would have been the first World Series. The Association Board of Di-
rectors actually entertained charges against Cincinnati, but "after a few hours' friendly chat" they were dropped.

In the summer of 1882 the Association began to strike even harder at League playing talent. Even though it had failed to hold on to Wise and Troy, by then it had managed to sign at least thirteen other National Leaguers. Now it attempted to get a pre-emption on the enemy's men for the 1883 season. It signed them to "optional" agreements, which committed the men to signing regular Association contracts for 1883 after the current season was over. The Association took the attitude that since it was not recognized by the League it need exercise no compunction about signing whatever League players it could.

However, the scheme backfired. Catcher Charlie Bennett of the Detroit League Club had signed one of these optional agreements with the Allegheny Club of the Association in August 1882. For a consideration of $100 he bound himself to execute a regular contract in October to play for the Alleghenys in 1883 at a salary of $1700. When the time came, Bennett refused to sign the regular contract and was about to sign with Detroit instead. Allegheny went to court to compel Bennett to stick to his original agreement and to restrain him from serving his old club.

Allegheny pled that it was engaged in the business of playing baseball for profit, had spent much time and money in preparing to exhibit games, and expected large sums in return. The plaintiff further argued that Bennett's defection had also influenced Ed Williamson and James Galvin, two other stars, to renege on similar agreements. The season was too far advanced to replace these with men of equal skill, and Allegheny therefore would be seriously damaged to the extent of not less than $1000.

The court upheld the defendant, though, on the grounds that the optional agreement was merely a preliminary arrangement, not a final one. Specific performance would not be compelled by the court when it was not clear that the minds of the parties had met, or that the agreement was "mutual," its terms "certain," its enforcement "practicable," and the complainant without adequate legal redress. Even if a valid contract were involved, the court went on, the plaintiff's bill would not stand up. It was presented prematurely, because no injury could be suffered until the commencement of the 1883 season. So again the Association had to be content with the empty gesture of blacklisting the players involved.

Nevertheless, the competition for players was unabated. The League threatened to blacklist any who signed with the Association, and Denny McKnight promised to step up the attack in 1883 if the League used "dishonorable" methods to prevent the Association from signing League
players. Next, League strategists reinstated ten blacklisted players who had been disqualified in September 1881. This stroke not only cleared the way for the return of blacklisted men who had joined the Association in 1882, but also reduced the Association's chances of signing the rest of them for 1883.

The war soon became a struggle over territorial rights as well as for players. Cities left open by the League were in danger of being occupied by its aggressive rival. Besides, the League was encumbered with cities like Providence, Worcester, and Troy, which had been wobbly even before the advent of the Association. In 1882, Troy and Worcester had to be rescued by funds from other League clubs to keep them from quitting before the schedule was finished. Providence managed to finish the season only because its "stockholders were bled anew" for necessary funds. When the Association entered New York and Columbus, thus lining up a strong eight-club circuit for 1883, the League knew it had to close ranks to meet the new danger. So it gave two of the weaklings, Troy and Worcester, "a polite bounce out of the membership" and moved into Philadelphia and New York instead, thus forecasting a struggle at close quarters in these two key territories for the season of 1883.

But as the two rivals girded themselves to continue the fight, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the National League would have no easy job in overcoming the Association. For the first time a non-League combination had completed its schedule, and in the doing had enjoyed unprecedented financial success. Association treasuries were "full of money." Leading beneficiaries of the golden flow were Lew Simmons, Bill Sharsig, and Charlie Mason, known as the Philadelphia triumvirate. They reportedly cleared between two hundred and three hundred thousand dollars.

The foundation of Association strength was the fact that the population of its six cities outnumbered the National's League's eight by approximately half a million. And the popular combination of twenty-five-cent ball, Sunday games, and liquor-selling on the grounds served admirably to tap this source. The Cleveland Leader reported that five of the six Association clubs drew larger crowds than the National League's top gate attraction, Chicago, whose attendance was three times larger than that of any other city in its circuit.

Also, the Association developed many outstanding and colorful players, many of them former amateur stars, who thrilled the fans. Among them were Charles Comiskey, Pete Browning, Bid McPhee, and Cub Stricker. The substantial sprinkling of former National Leaguers balanced Association ranks, and its rich treasuries put it in a position to bid still higher for more of them.
League spokesmen might invent curious explanations for the success of the Association, but they had to acknowledge it. *Spalding's Guide for 1883*, for instance, discovered that the success of the Association was due to “the revival of the public confidence induced by the gradual establishment of honest professional play under the auspices of the National League.” But W. G. Thompson, owner of the Detroit Club, was realistic enough to realize that the League could not afford to “sneer” at the Association. With the “Beer and Whiskey Circuit” (as its detractors mockingly called the Association) so firmly entrenched, the prospect for 1883 was for more wild bidding for players, higher operating costs, and ruinous competition. But at this juncture a third party intervened.

Delegates from eight Midwestern towns were meeting at Fort Wayne, Indiana, to revive the Northwestern League, a minor circuit which had collapsed in 1879 after only one season. Anxious to ensure protection of their player contracts before launching their new venture, they wired the League, which was meeting in Providence the same day, requesting co-operation and reciprocity. The League responded instantly by appointing a three-man committee headed by A. G. Mills to confer with the Northwestern League and—obviously with the American Association in mind—“with any other association of base-ball clubs.”

Mills had recently taken over the presidency of the League following Hulbert’s death and Soden’s brief interregnum, and he was particularly interested in reaching a settlement, because he thought affairs were “drifting in the direction which nearly ruined baseball many years ago, when contracts were disregarded and players employed . . . without regard to the odium their past conduct had brought upon the game . . . . I take it,” said Mills, “these associations are run by full-grown men,” and “whatever and wherever the fault of the past,” it was “possible and proper” to meet “on the basis of the ‘status quo’” and arrange to honor each others’ contracts while retaining the “good opinion of the public.”

Mills accompanied these statesmanlike pronouncements with a vision of things to come. He wanted to see “a large number of associations and clubs dotted all over this continent,” all in agreement on “some general plan of enforcing contracts and barring dishonorable or disreputable players.” Each of these associations would be “independent to conduct its internal affairs.” Mills had thought that the League Alliance system would accomplish these ends, but he now realized that it was “natural that clubs should prefer to unite in competing for a championship of their own . . . ” and that they would rather be “perfectly independent so far as management of their affairs is concerned.” Mills’s idea of linking together all professional baseball into one great network was the rough outline of Organized Baseball as it was to be—a galaxy of closely
associated leagues and clubs operating under its own set of laws for the control of players and the protection of territories.

This willingness to begin peace talks was received coolly by the Association at first, because it felt the League had never treated it with "due courtesy" and had "stolen away its players." When he learned of this reluctance, Mills wrote Elias Matter, president of the Northwestern, suggesting that if the American Association would not "unite in a scheme for the common good," the National and Northwestern might work out an understanding between themselves. He pointed out, however, that without the co-operation of the Association it would be more difficult to enforce contracts.

Prospects for peace improved when the Association finally agreed to name a committee to meet with the League only. With this to work on, Mills skillfully maneuvered to bring about a joint meeting of the three parties. He wrote Jimmy Williams, Association secretary, urging a united conference as the most effective means of serving "the material interests of all the clubs." Then, to exert additional pressure on the Association, Mills asked Matter to write to Denny McKnight and say that the Northwestern had originally planned to meet with the League, but when it found out the Association was also ready to get together with the League, the Northwestern arranged to meet with both organizations. Mills was confident that McKnight could not refuse a joint conference if Matter would write him along these lines.

After considerable correspondence to work out details, Mills finally got agreement on a three-way meeting to be held February 17 at the Hotel Victoria, New York. A last-minute hitch developed over J. H. Pank's refusal to leave Louisville. Mills solved this by suggesting a proxy, so O. P. Caylor substituted for him. Mills prepared the groundwork for the conference by drafting an agreement as a basis of discussion, after consulting with influential baseball men like Al Spalding, Nick Young, Harry Wright, and Al Reach. He took care to send advance copies to the other members of the National League committee, John B. Day, New York owner; and Arthur B. Soden of the Red Sox. As it turned out, Mills's text was adopted almost verbatim, and it became known first as the Tripartite Pact and then, to allow for additional members, the National Agreement.

At the "Harmony Conference," as it was called, the National League men were joined by Association delegates Lew Simmons, O. P. Caylor, and Billie Barnie, who had returned to Baltimore, bringing his Atlantics with him. Elias Matter was the lone delegate for the Northwestern. With his usual careful planning, Mills had an expert stenographer available so that any document drawn up could be "put in shape, and multiplied."
The conference went smoothly, especially since “no delegate introduced any matter which could cause estrangement.” First on the agenda was how to dispose of the players. Those currently under contract were considered to be in good standing, and were to stay put. Eighteen disputed players, most of whom had signed two or more contracts, were arbitrarily assigned to specific clubs by mutual agreement. Each association promised to recognize the player contracts of the others.

The reserve was extended to cover eleven players on each club, and each association agreed to respect the reserve lists of the others. League and Association reserved men were guaranteed a minimum salary of $1000; those in the Northwestern or in any Alliance club would get at least $750. All contracts were to be for seven months, and no club was to negotiate with players for the following season until October 10. Clubs were not supposed to bargain with released players until after a twenty-day waiting period. The three associations also pledged to uphold each others’ suspensions and expulsions by refusing to employ or play against any man not in good standing. An important contribution to the evolution of Organized Baseball’s administrative machinery was the creation of an Arbitration Committee composed of three representatives of each League. Its function was to interpret the Tripartite Pact and to settle all disputes and complaints growing out of it.

The National League and the Northwestern accepted the Tripartite Pact at once, but the American Association did not agree to it until after animated discussion at its March 12 meeting. Some Association men were reported “strongly opposed” to the eleven-man reserve provision, because they feared it would give “great advantages” to clubs which already had the best players. They finally withdrew their objections, but for some time thereafter the Association remained doubtful of the efficacy of the reserve. Every so often, its owners talked about revamping the reserve or dropping it entirely, much to the dismay of the National League.

For its acceptance of the Tripartite Pact, the Association was denounced in one newspaper for eating both “crow” and “humble pie.” It was told that it had allowed itself to become “nothing more nor less than the League Alliance.” But an Eastern journal praised the peace treaty as the beginning of a new epoch in baseball’s history. This opinion was valid.

The Tripartite Pact, or National Agreement, marked the beginning of Organized Baseball. It was the first formula for regulating competition among leagues for players and territories. It was also the first official baseball document to include the reserve provision. Not only did it bring the reserve into the open, but by enlarging its scope it tightened its effect. By placing nearly all men on reserve, the National
Agreement, for all practical purposes, ended bidding for players between clubs and between leagues. As one commentator put it, the clubs of one league would be saved from "the rapacity" of those in the others.

By staking out and safeguarding territorial rights, the National Agreement contributed immeasurably to the permanency and value of the club franchises. No longer need a club worry for fear that being prosperous would merely call forth rivals eager to muscle in on its territory. As the National Agreement proved its worth, new leagues would seek its protection. With each additional combination in the fold, it would become increasingly difficult for the remaining ones to stay out of Organized Baseball. A. G. Mills once declared that without agreements professional baseball would be a "wildcat affair." Maybe so. Certainly without agreements the industry would have developed along radically different lines, if at all. With them it was wild enough, as we shall see.
ORGANIZED BASEBALL'S FIRST CHALLENGE

The Alliance between the National League and the American Association under the National Agreement endured until the end of the decade, when it became a casualty of the great upheaval of 1890. While not a love match, it was at least a marriage of convenience holding the two major leagues together despite stresses and strains which at times threatened to wreck the union. During these years of baseball prosperity, the National Agreement—the Blackstone of baseball law, as a contemporary writer called it—became more and more pervasive, as new minor leagues were organized and placed themselves under its rule.

The first to challenge this system was the Union Association. The Unions were organized in Pittsburgh, September 12, 1883, but their main impulse came from St. Louis. In the beginning they expressed the intention of honoring the player contracts of other leagues, and disavowed any wish to war against them. However, a copy of the Union Association Constitution in the Cleveland Public Library plainly reveals that it was a threat to Organized Baseball's territorial rights and monopsony control over its players. This rare document, almost an exact replica of League and Association constitutions in other respects, not only shows that the Unions were planning to place clubs in six major league cities,* but it flatly states that the Union Association "does not favor the arbitrary reserve rule, which makes the player almost the slave of the club." The Unions reinforced this stand with a resolution, adopted at the Pittsburgh meeting, saying that "while we recognize the validity of all contracts made by the League and American Association, we cannot recognize any agreement whereby any number of ball players may be reserved by any club for any time beyond the terms of his contract with said club."

The Unions seemed to have ample funds to start their venture. The

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* Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. The two non-major league cities were Washington and Altoona.
secretary-treasurer, William Warren White of Washington, reported they had $100,000 in cash, and would have no difficulty in securing more if needed. As A. G. Mills acknowledged, the Unions had “a good many moneyed men” behind them. Chief backer and soon to be president of the Unions was Henry V. Lucas, scion of a wealthy old St. Louis family and possessor of a considerable fortune stemming from his grandfather, one of the early settlers of St. Louis, who had purchased large tracts of real estate in and around the city. Lucas was also president of the Mound City Transportation Company. He had deep roots in St. Louis baseball. A brother, John B. C. Lucas, was president of the St. Louis Base Ball Association in the 1870’s and of the National League club there in 1877. Henry himself was an amateur player who laid out a field at “Normandy,” his country seat, where he delighted to invite his friends to play ball and enjoy an “elegant spread” afterwards. Lucas had in mind placing a club in one of the major leagues, but the American Association, of course, was already represented in St. Louis by the Browns. As for the League—assuming he could get in—its fifty-cent admission rule and ban on Sunday games would make competition with Von der Ahe’s team difficult.

Besides, his “frequent chats” with numerous major league players had convinced Lucas that they were being imposed upon by the reserve rule. To him it was “the most arbitrary and unjust rule ever suggested”—one that “ought to be broken”—and he felt it was only a question of time until baseball players revolted against this regulation “which they despise, and will no more submit to than to have rings put in their noses and be led by them.” When the chance came, Lucas turned to the Union Association, establishing a ball park at the corner of Cass Avenue and West 25th Street, conveniently reached by two streetcar lines.

Another substantial Union backer was A. H. Henderson, a Baltimore mattress manufacturer who financed the Unions’ Baltimore and Chicago clubs. Ellis Wainwright and Adolphus Busch, St. Louis brewers and two of the wealthiest men in the area, had also invested. Wainwright was president of the Wainwright Brewery Company, third largest in St. Louis, and Busch was head of Anheuser-Busch, which returned to baseball in 1953 through “Gussie” Busch’s purchase of the St. Louis Cardinals. Lucas also claimed that Pennsylvania Railroad officials were behind the Unions’ Altoona Club. George Wright lent prestige as head of the Boston Unions, and the new association officially adopted the baseball manufactured by the Wright and Ditson Company, in which the former great shortstop was a partner. But Lucas was the chief

* Henry B. Bennett preceded him briefly as president.
source of funds, supplying capital for other Union clubs as well as his own team.

Ignoring these supporters of substance and reputation, the Boston Globe said, "We search the list ... for the name of one person of means or responsibility, or whose business and social standing is such as to inspire confidence." To which the Philadelphia Times retorted that the Unions' personnel was "fully equal to that of the League and Association in brains, intellect, and financial strength."

A. G. Mills disparaged the Unions as a refuge for "dead-beats" and "played-out bummers," and the opposition press joined in the chorus against the "Onions," lambasting them as a haven for crooked players and "lushers" who "cannot find employment in respectable clubs." O. P. Caylor reserved one of his choice designations for the St. Louis Unions, calling them "The Lucas-Wainwright Lunatic Asylum." There was just enough truth in these slurs to give the anti-Unions a talking point. Outfielder Frank Gardner joined the Pittsburgh Unions after he was "bounced" from the Association for drunkenness. It was not long before he returned to his old ways, teaming up with Charlie Sweeney, a former National Leaguer who had gone to the St. Louis Unions, on a drunken escapade, for which both of them were fined. It was also true that at least one Union player was expelled for drunkenness. Dry pledges were extracted from a few others. Yet, as it turned out, about thirty Union players without previous major league experience were good enough to win places on League and Association clubs either the following year or eventually.

A. G. Mills also spoke scornfully of the "beer money" floating Union clubs, and to discredit them, a story was widely circulated that they were being run in the interests of brewers. This charge was a sore point with the new league. Frederick F. Espenschied, brother-in-law of Lucas and vice president of the St. Louis Unions, labeled the story "contemptible." While acknowledging that some brewers had invested in the Unions, he was quick to call attention to the prominent role of brewers in American Association clubs. The New York Clipper tried hard to counter the charge but could find only four Union clubs free of the influence of beer.

When Union supporters took the offense, they concentrated on the reserve clause. To them it was an "iniquitous practice of dictating to a player" and a "most noxious edict." The St. Louis Republican declared, "Any St. Louis merchant or manufacturer who would try to dictate to his employees where and for what price they should work, and would attempt to deprive them from working altogether unless they accepted his terms, would be hissed off the 'Change' floor." In a letter to a newspaper editor, a Union fan maintained that to be against the Unions
meant upholding the reserve clause, but this was something which was beyond the understanding of some sports writers, who had “as much gift for reasoning as a giraffe would have to play a flute in the dark.” What a far cry was all this invective from the polite, restrained amateur days of the Knickerbockers!

The Tripartite partners moved swiftly to protect their territorial rights by officially banning from admission to the National Agreement any new association that had clubs in cities already occupied by Organized Baseball. The Association passed a measure expelling any member club which played against one from an association that had invaded a National Agreement city. Mills tightened the ring by pledging League support of the boycott and suggesting a circular letter be sent to all National Agreement clubs, reminding them they would forfeit their rights under the Agreement if they played a Union team.

However, for reasons of strategy an exception was made. The Eastern League, a minor circuit, was admitted to the National Agreement, although it had been turned down the previous year, and its Monumental Club was allowed to share the American Association’s Baltimore territory. The change of heart was spurred by fear that the Eastern and Union Associations might join forces. After the Union challenge passed, the Baltimore Monumentals were unceremoniously dispossessed, although the Eastern League itself was permitted to continue its membership in the National Agreement.

The Unions struck back as best they could against Organized Baseball’s boycott. In “spirited retaliation” they ordered their clubs not to play League, Association, or Northwestern teams. They also took steps to admit small-town clubs to quasi-membership by adding an “alliance clause” to their constitution—another testimony to the durability of the National League’s alliance concept.

The Union War inspired the formation of “reserve teams.” These were auxiliaries of the major league clubs made up of youngsters recruited from semi-professional and amateur ranks. They were paid salaries and played regularly scheduled games with each other, charging twenty-five cents admission. The purpose of these scrub teams was to keep as many players as possible out of Union control and at the same time to siphon away customers from Union parks. Of course, there was always the possibility, as Chris Von der Ahe explained, that these teams might be a means of developing new talent for the parent club, and even supply replacements in emergencies. The reserve teams were also used to keep the regulars on their mettle. The St. Louis Browns were well aware of this, having grown tired of hearing, “If you don’t play well you will be dropped to the reserve crowd.” The Unions made some effort to counter with reserve teams of their own, but without success.
A number of their “Preserves,” as they were jokingly called, melted away as the season advanced. Temporary expedients of war though they were, the reserve teams bore the closest resemblance to modern baseball’s farm system yet discernible.

The League was ever alert to other ways of eating into Union attendance. Mills urged Harry Wright to improvise a game of some kind in Philadelphia on the Fourth of July to cut Union patronage on the holiday. He also suggested to Spalding the feasibility of forming another team in Chicago, ostensibly independent but really under Spalding’s control. He foresaw that sooner or later there would be a second ball club in Chicago, and saw no reason why Spalding should not run both of them. In the meantime, Spalding would be confronting the Chicago Unions with a double dose of competition. Nothing came of the suggestion just yet. Mills was premature, but his prediction was correct. Spalding gave technical permission to the Association in 1885 for placing a club in Chicago, but with the brief exception of the Chicago Brotherhood Club in 1890, the National League had no competitor in that city until the American League moved in permanently at the turn of the century.

However, these maneuvers were subordinate to the main fight, which was centered on the players. Each side’s object was to keep hold of its own players and to obtain as many of the other side’s as it could. Main inducements for the players were higher salaries, advance money, and two- and three-year contracts. Even before the 1884 season started, Mills learned that “emmisaries [sic] of the wreckers” were making strong efforts “to debauch our reserved players.” He complained that they were offering high salaries and “certainly giving us a good deal of trouble.” Organized Baseball must prepare itself for “a battle with that gang,” which he predicted must come sooner or later, and the sooner the better, he believed, for it would be a great misfortune to baseball if the Unions should live through the season.

To thwart the Unions, John B. Day, New York owner, introduced a resolution at the November meeting of the League to blacklist any reserved player who jumped his contract. The purpose was not only to discourage a player from going over to the Unions, but to lesson the temptation to lure him back with a higher salary, which would amount to rewarding instead of punishing him for leaving. More important, it meant extending the reserve far beyond its original intent by converting it into a weapon for fending off outside competition. For the time being, the League took no action on the Day resolution, contenting itself with having Mills circularize all club presidents in the three allied leagues for full information about Union tampering with their players. However, the Association did not postpone action, even though, only a
month before, Denny McKnight had publicly announced that the Unions were “not causing this association any alarm,” and that reports of players deserting were only rumors. In December the Association went ahead to adopt the Day resolution and at the same time reinstate some of its blacklisted players, in order to keep them out of the hands of the enemy. This placed the Association in the anomalous position of imposing the blacklist on some players while they were simultaneously lifting it from others.

The League soon followed suit. At its December meeting it put the pressure on wavering players by threatening to blacklist all who did not sign contracts within thirty days of receiving them. Then it too adopted the Day resolution in March 1884. But before doing so, Mills privately urged clubowners to try to recover reserved players from the Unions. However, he was opposed to making a public statement to this effect. In January he used his influence with George W. Howe, vice president of the Cleveland Club, in an effort to recover second-baseman Fred Dunlap, a reserved player who had signed with Lucas’s St. Louis Unions. If Lucas sued, said Mills, Howe could answer that the Union contract was obtained under false pretenses and the transaction was therefore “fraudulent.”

Dunlap himself was still willing to talk business with the League, and he let it be known that he was ready to go to the New York Club if they would pay him $4000 and could get Cleveland to waive its rights to him. Pressure was put on Cleveland to let Dunlap return to the National Agreement fold with some other club, if they could not get him back for themselves. Mills, however, thought such a deal was “out of the question,” but urged Cleveland to “sound out Dunlap about going back to your club.” He evidently feared the Association might pick up Dunlap in the shuffle. After the Day resolution was passed and Dunlap was duly blacklisted, rumors persisted that Cleveland was still quietly trying to get him back.

However, Mills made clear his determination to uphold the Day resolution once it had become official League policy. To all the talk that the “secessionists” could return to Organized Baseball whenever they liked, Mills replied that “he was never more earnest in his life than when he said that these players should never play with any club connected with the National Agreement.” He reinforced his statement by going before the Arbitration Committee on April 19 and proposing a supplementary resolution to support the Day edict. Clubs were reminded by this “Order in Relation to Ineligible Reserved Players” that they were prohibited from employing any players who had violated the reserve, and it directed that any club which employed such a player, or played a team which used one, would forfeit all rights under the National
Agreement. The order was accepted unanimously. After the Union War, this directive became a source of serious disagreement and very nearly disrupted the alliance between the League and Association.

In the course of the war, the Unions won over about thirty National Agreement men. Outstanding among them were Jack Glasscock, Hugh "One-armed" Daly, George Schaffer, Emil Gross, Fred Dunlap, Charlie Briody, Jim McCormick, Charlie Sweeney, Larry Corcoran, and Tommy Bond from the National League. The Association lost Jack Gleason, Davy Rowe, William Taylor, George Bradley, Sam Crane, and Tony Mullane. Some of these stars were recovered, among them Bond, Corcoran, Mullane, and Taylor, and the major leagues added a few Union players to their own ranks for good measure. On top of this, the allies refused to recognize Union contracts, and went ahead to sign some players that had already been hired by the Unions. Their justification of this policy was that the Unions had disregarded the reserve clause. Critics reproached the League and Association for their lack of principle in committing acts against outside clubs which they condemned as "dishonorable" when it happened to them.

The Unions, naturally, were incensed at what they regarded as a "systematic movement" to break up their organization by "approaching, bribing, and coercing" players who had signed "legal and valid" Union contracts and by offering money to those who committed "treachery." Secretary White threatened Union players who broke their contracts with expulsion and legal proceedings. In reply, a pro-League reporter used the argument of social Darwinism. After all, he said, the Unions started out to show the older leagues that their system was "wrong and weak," and if the Unions got the worst of it in the struggle "for survival of the fittest," they should accept the verdict without "whining" about "unfair treatment."

Mills answered White by refusing "to dignify that gang by seriously considering any of their nonsense." However, if they should start legal action, Mills advised attacking their contract in the court. Privately, he wrote that the League and Association decided to have each of their clubs fight any injunction separately. He advised paying the salaries of players who might be enjoined and also finding jobs outside baseball for them in order to cut payrolls.

The Unions made good their threat of legal action by going to court over pitcher Tony Mullane. "The Count of Macaroni," as he was sometimes called because of his dandified appearance, was one of the first to violate the reserve clause. In November, he spurned the St. Louis Browns' offer of $1900, jumped the reserve, and signed with the St. Louis Unions for a reported $2500 salary, part of which was paid in advance. But before ever throwing a ball for the Unions, Mullane
broke his contract and signed with Toledo of the Association for the same pay.

Mullane admitted that he made an about-face because he was afraid of being expelled and blacklisted under the Day resolution. How he had happened to join the Association's Toledo Club instead of returning to St. Louis, where he belonged, is a story of behind-the-scenes tactics employed during the war. Von der Ahe knew that if he could not get his star pitcher back again at the salary he was willing to pay, the next best thing was to get him away from the Browns' competitors, the St. Louis Unions. At the same time he wanted to make sure that Mullane went to a weak Association club, so he would not hurt the Browns' chances for a pennant by strengthening another contender. The Association's newly admitted Toledo Club met these requirements. The first problem was how to keep other Association owners from bidding for Mullane. Mills showed them how to do it. He suggested to the Browns, who evidently had asked his advice, that they could arrange for the owners to sign a paper pledging themselves not to bid for Mullane. No obstacle to the transaction was raised, so Mullane must have been transferred to Toledo by the gentleman's agreement proposed by Mills, or a similar understanding.

This supposition is strengthened by the fact that both Spalding and Mills urged the owners to persuade catcher Emil Gross to desert the Unions and return to some League club. It was of secondary importance to them whether he rejoined the Philadelphia Club, to which he originally belonged. In the case of Mullane, there was also the problem of how Toledo would meet the $2500 salary he was reported to be receiving from the Unions. Jimmy Williams, secretary of the Browns, categorically denied it, but there was widespread talk that the other Association owners contributed to a pool for this purpose.

When Mullane made his St. Louis debut in a Toledo uniform against the Browns in early May, his reception was unseasonably warm. As he came to bat he was hissed and jeered. He responded by raising his cap to the crowd and making "a chilly, derisive bow." These formalities out of the way, he proceeded to strike out. The next day attorneys for Lucas succeeded in obtaining a court order restraining the colorful Tony from playing in St. Louis.

Flushed with this victory, Newton Crane, one of Lucas's lawyers, followed the Toledo Club to Cincinnati, where he obtained another injunction against Mullane from the Common Pleas Court. The case was appealed to United States Circuit Court, where Judge Baxter heard the arguments in his private chambers and, without waiting for affidavits to be forwarded from St. Louis, dissolved the injunction. To him, the controversy was too trivial to take the time of the court,
because baseball was not a business but a sport—a point on which the *Enquirer* quickly set the judge straight, remarking that he was "laboring under a delusion." Nevertheless, Baxter refused to modify his decision at a rehearing soon after. The St. Louis injunction, however, remained in force until 1887, when it was set aside by request of the St. Louis Athletic Association.

Finding himself stymied in court, Lucas announced that he was going to ask the Unions to "go into the contract-breaking business" too. Asked if he thought the Unions would go along with his proposal, he replied, "I am the Union Association. Whatever I do is all right... the Association will be with me." This was too good an opportunity for the opposition press, which promptly dubbed him "I-am-the-Union-Association Lucas." Lucas gauged his colleagues correctly. Heretofore committed to respecting contracts, although not the reserve, the Unions now decided to cast aside these scruples. Some supporters of Lucas and the Unions regretted the decision. But the Cincinnati *Enquirer* mocked newspapers friendly to Organized Baseball for remaining "silent as the grave" while League and Association clubs were convincing players to break contracts and then "howling" when the Unions were "forced" to retaliate for self-preservation. Lucas frankly said that "everything is fair in baseball as in war and I want my share of the fun while it is going on."

He soon had his wish. Within a month the Unions made their prize catch of the war, snaring catcher Charles Briody, shortstop Jack Glasscock, and pitcher Jim McCormick from the Cleveland squad. These men went to the Cincinnati Unions in "the base-ball sensation of the season." Each was paid $1000 at once. Glasscock and Briody were to receive $1500 each and McCormick $2500 for the rest of the season's work. All were guaranteed employment for 1885. Lucas was delighted. While he did not "take any pride in contract-breaking as a regular business," he expressed his pleasure at going into the enemy's camp, capturing his guns, and using them on his own side. Justus Thorner, who had the distinction of being president of the Cincinnati Club in the League, the Association, and now the Unions, seconded Lucas. "The League has stolen our players at will, has libeled us, and now we propose to take what players we can get." Briody then went to the root of the matter: "It is a matter of dollars and cents."

Loss of these stars dealt Cleveland a "death blow." In fact, the club had been tottering since the last part of July, and at that time several other National Agreement teams had begun dickering for its players, including the three stars. The Unions simply moved faster than the others. Now C. H. Bulkley, Cleveland president, figured it would cost him $5000 to finish the season, and he was "disinclined" to carry on
without help from the League. Mills feared that if Cleveland fell apart, or if the idea that they were about to collapse became known, the rest of the players would fall to the Unions.

To keep the faltering club in the field, Mills called for an indirect subsidy, asking the other League clubs to pay Cleveland half the gate receipts instead of the regular three-tenths when the club visited them, but to accept only three-tenths when they went to Cleveland. As a further aid in holding the players for the League, Mills asked Cleveland's vice president, George Howe, to let League authorities know confidentially "if your club must disband," and, if it must, to reserve all the players beforehand and then release them to other League clubs for a "consideration." Mills acknowledged that such a stratagem was "somewhat irregular," but admitted it was "constantly done."

Cleveland also managed to pick up some players from the disbanding Grand Rapids Club, because the other League clubs agreed to waive the rule which required a ten-day waiting period before a club could negotiate with a released player. In spite of all these assists, Cleveland disappeared from the League that winter, its players going to the Brooklyn Association Club. But by then the Union threat had just about passed.

The League nearly had another casualty in its Providence Club, which wavered momentarily early in the season when it lost its star pitcher, Charlie Sweeney, to the Unions. Again Mills showed his leadership. He wrote the management that he was confident they would hold on. "Disbandment," said the League president, would confer a "crowning triumph" on the "scoundrels" who had "corrupted" the players.

Providence made a remarkable about-face, however. Led by Charles "Old Hoss" Radbourne, they not only won the pennant but also defeated the New York Metropolitans, Association champions, in three straight games on successive days in a post-season series. Radbourne had more than filled Sweeney's shoes. With a remarkable exhibition of stamina and skill, he pitched practically every day, working a record total of 672 innings, and then went on to pitch the three straight victories over the Mets in what was supposed to be a best-three-out-of-five series. In fact, Providence went so well during the season that in August its owner, Henry Root, even proposed "freezing out" the smaller clubs of the League and reorganizing with large cities only. Mills opposed his scheme, although he, Spalding, Day, and Soden actually held a "very secret and confidential" meeting at which the idea was probably discussed—and quashed, for nothing came of it.

The American Association also had its troubles. It had expanded into a twelve-club league, adding Brooklyn, Washington, Toledo, and In-
This extension enabled it to engross more players and to present a challenge to the Unions in Washington. The experiment proved an unhappy one, however. Three of the new clubs turned out to be poor money-makers, and, worst of all, Washington had to be replaced with the Virginia Club of Richmond six weeks before the end of the campaign. So 1884 was less remunerative for the Association as a whole than the previous year.

The Northwestern, third member of the original National Agreement trio, was the weakest. For one thing, it lost many of its best players to the Unions. It was not helped by the dubious activities of its secretary, Samuel G. Morton. He was accused of supplying players to the Unions through a private employment agency which he ran, using his position with the Northwestern to gather the necessary data about players available throughout the country. When his dealings were questioned, he denied exploiting his office for this purpose, inferring that his information was garnered from newspapers, and he said he was willing to omit his official title from his agency's newspaper advertisements. Mills brusquely rejected his compromise and demanded that Morton have no dealings whatever with the Unions. Otherwise, he expected the Northwestern to find a secretary "who will not allow himself . . . to be made use of by the common enemy for a consideration."

A. G. Spalding himself almost certainly was implicated. Morton was his "right-hand man" and a sales clerk in his Chicago store. Morton's baseball records were kept there, and he evidently used the store as an office for the agency. Mills was not afraid to take on Spalding, who, he had "no doubt," was "the company" or at least "the responsible head" of it, and promised to give Spalding "a piece of my mind somewhat more emphatic than I have sent to Morton." He added angrily, "The trouble I have with the rank and file of our army leaves me little room for patience with its 'sutlers,' and you may be sure that I will either put a stop to this kind of business, or go out of baseball." More amazing, Spalding's answer indicated he was involved, but he gave Mills his word that the agency would not be used in any way helpful to the Unions. On the other hand, Morton evidently played no favorites in his business operations. He could also benefit the League, as shown by a letter, which he doubtless sent at Spalding's bidding, to Joseph J. Ellick, then under Union contract, inviting him to take charge of the Chicago reserve team and requesting him to "Please keep this a confidential matter." Morton was soon reported to be giving up the agency "in disgust." He may have done so temporarily, but the agency was again operating successfully after the Union War.

A third drag on the Northwestern was intrigue aimed at removing it from the protecting shield of the National Agreement. W. G. Thompson,
owner of the Detroit League Club, had strenuously opposed admitting the Northwestern to the National Agreement in the first place. Later on, the Association wanted to expel the Northwestern for alleged failure of some of its clubs to pay players and for "other faults." However, A. G. Mills insisted it not only be kept together, but bolstered, because if it were destroyed its players would fall into Union hands.

But the "financial embarrassment" which beset the Northwestern was too much for it. The circuit encompassed several states, and the small towns in it did not have enough fans to pay the cost of all the traveling required. By August its club began to drop out. Near the end of the season only Milwaukee and St. Paul were left. When these two went over to the Unions, the Northwestern ceased to exist.

In spite of these weaknesses and difficulties in the National Agreement camp, the Union Association lost the war. It suffered its first casualty after only six weeks of operation in 1884, when Altoona withdrew. Thereafter, Henry V. Lucas resembled a person with his arms full of packages trying to retrieve them as they fall. Each time he reached for one, he dropped one or two more, and so never quite succeeded in recovering them all. Lucas spent the summer industriously trying to patch up his circuit by finding replacements for clubs as they expired.

Kansas City substituted for Altoona and finished the season. The Chicago franchise was transferred to Pittsburgh in August, where it remained until mid-September, when St. Paul filled in for the balance of the season. The Keystones of Philadelphia also disbanded early in August. Wilmington was brought in from the minor Eastern League to fill the gap, but, even though aided by some special financial concessions, it survived only a month, after which Milwaukee, of the fading Northwestern circuit, was enlisted. All told, only five of the original eight Union clubs—Cincinnati, St. Louis, Baltimore, Washington, and Boston—carried on to the end.

The total of thirteen Union clubs, together with the Association's thirteen and the National League's eight, made thirty-four clubs operating in 1884, a figure unsurpassed in major league history. Out of all six clubs were concentrated in Pennsylvania, five in Ohio, and four in New York state. All three leagues competed in Philadelphia. Eight other cities contained two competing clubs. Gate receipts naturally dwindled, and, as their large club mortality shows, the Unions were hardest hit.

This constant shifting of clubs disrupted playing schedules and detracted from interest. Public confidence in the Unions was also undermined by the fact that they were newcomers in baseball and had to depend on many new players. But perhaps the Unions' most serious drawback was the lack of balance in playing strength among its clubs.
Lucas's St. Louis team not only outclassed other Union clubs, but was one of the strongest in the country. There was never any doubt that it would win the championship. It finished the season with 91 victories against only 16 losses, for a phenomenal winning percentage of .850. Cincinnati, next-best among clubs playing a complete schedule, won only 68 and lost 35, which left them 21 games behind. And Cincinnati did this well only because of a winning streak due largely to the acquisition of Briody, Glasscock, and McCormick. Most of the other Union clubs were ludicrously far behind.

With the pennant decided early, fan interest slackened. Financial losses were heavy, estimates varying all the way from $50,000 to a quarter of a million. Lucas's personal stake was substantial. He admitted to having lost $17,000. It was claimed later that Lucas had "dissipated" his fortune in the Union War, but this is very unlikely, since he was one of seven children each of whom inherited a million dollars from their father, James H. Lucas, at his death in 1873. However, it is true that he eventually did lose his money as a result of baseball and other ventures. He later could be found working for the Vandalia Railroad, where he eventually became head of the ticket office.

By late August it was already apparent that the Unions were on the downgrade, and they went from bad to worse. Their Washington Club sought membership in the Association, and Cincinnati indicated it wanted to do the same. Some Union players were trying to get back their former jobs in Organized Baseball—another unmistakable sign. Only five clubs were represented, one of them by proxy, at the December 18 meeting of the Unions in St. Louis. At a second meeting January 15 just two clubs registered, and Lucas himself was among the missing, whereupon the Milwaukee and Kansas City delegates voted to disband the Union Association.

Actually, the fate of the Unions had already been determined by Lucas's defection to the National League. Before the second Union meeting he began arranging with League representatives for the admission of his club. It became known that he was reconciled to the reserve clause as a necessary evil and was willing to give up Sunday ball and liquor selling to get League membership. He went so far as to pay $2500 to the Cleveland owners, $500 in cash with the balance on account, for their franchise. Unfortunately for him, he thought—or at least claimed—that the deal included the Cleveland players, who would strengthen his club if and when he entered the League. But to his chagrin, Brooklyn signed them first, in a transaction that was anything but above board. The Cleveland owners may have known about the transaction, but at any rate they denied that the players were part of
their bargain with Lucas. When Lucas angrily refused to pay the balance, Cleveland sued him and recovered.

League men were very interested in having Lucas join them. They would be getting a strong replacement for their shattered Cleveland Club and in the process destroying whatever remaining life that might be left in the Unions. It did not matter to them if they received their chief opponent, the man whom Mills wanted to ban “forever,” the one who had vowed to “break up the League and the American Association.” Lucas finally did become part of the National League, but it took some doing before it was finally accomplished.

Behind him was the wreckage of the Union Association, which represented the first overt challenge to Organized Baseball's reserve clause. The fact that Henry V. Lucas of St. Louis, the first staunch opponent of the reserve clause, ended by accepting it is strong testimony to its practical appeal.