

MANSFIELD MEMORIES: Lowney field was place for baseball in early 1900s

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MANSFIELD - This is the second in a four-part series on athletic fields of Mansfield.

When Walter Lowney built his chocolate factory on Oakland Street in 1903, it meant jobs and continued growth for Mansfield. But few anticipated the contribution he would make to the local sports scene.

Lowney was a generous benefactor to the town. He built a baseball diamond just **north of the factory for his “club” team, which went up against tough competition** from all across the region. Lowney loved baseball and wanted to field a winning team.

By 1907 Lowney field was taking shape. The dirt infield was carefully leveled. The **grass outfield was described as “smooth as a house floor.”** There were three rows of bleachers on the first and third base lines each 75 feet long. Directly behind



Chocolate factory owner Walter Lowney built a baseball field in 1907 enjoyed by his workers and the community for many years.

home plate was a special **section for Lowney's invited guests and members of the press**. There was a section on the third base side for boys under the age of 16 who could watch for free.

In foul territory was the Lowney clubhouse, a large building that served as a kind of recreation center for Lowney employees and the general public. It featured showers and a locker for home and visiting ballplayers. During baseball season the clubhouse balcony was covered with a canvas awning which provided a **“splendid place to view the games.”**



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For about two decades Lowney field was where most baseball games in Mansfield **were played. At first the club teams were managed by Lowney's son-in-law Edson McRae**, who had pitched for Amherst College. McRae was followed by Clarence Barnes, who enjoyed a standout baseball career at Yale. Lowney paid most of the expenses in running the club.

Some Mansfield residents played on the Lowney teams, but many were brought **in from outside in an attempt to field a winner. Three of Lowney's club players went on to the major leagues: Jack Quinn, Buck O'Brien, and John “Shano” Collins**. They had interesting connections to baseball history that we will examine at a later date.

Mansfield High School was also welcomed to the confines of Lowney Field. The MHS baseball team played there, as did the football team when they managed to

put together a squad. When Mansfield played their tradition rivals from Foxborough the games were usually well attended. Mansfield club football teams took to the gridiron there as well.

Lowney field was also used for company outings. Lowney owned an additional factory in Boston. The city workers made an annual train trip to Mansfield to **celebrate the company field day with their “country” brethren.**

Field days usually had a band to welcome and entertain the workers. One year the band accompanied the Boston employees as they sang a song of thanks to their Mansfield cohorts and to Lowney. Athletic competitions followed, with awards presented at the conclusion by Walter Lowney himself.

Employees were treated to lunch and a baseball game played by the Lowney club team. At the end of the day the Boston employees walked happily back to the train station, and the Mansfield workers made their much shorter journeys home.

Walter Lowney passed away suddenly in 1921 at the age of 66. His obituary mentioned that he never denied use of **the clubhouse or the field to “any worthy applicant.”** But Lowney field and clubhouse disappeared in the years after his death. Subsequent owners knocked down the clubhouse and built new structures on the field to improve chocolate production. But generations later recalled Lowney field as the site of **some of Mansfield’s most interesting athletic tilts.**



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