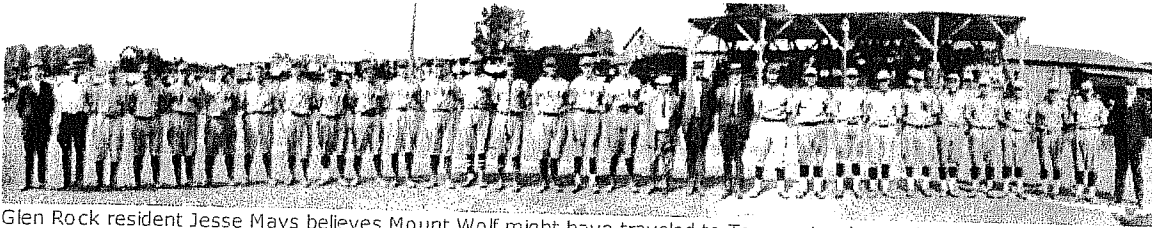


## News

### Readers help shed light on old baseball photo

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Glen Rock resident Jesse Mays believes Mount Wolf might have traveled to Towson to play against Spring Grove (Maryland) in a tournament when this photo was taken. (Submitted)

Two months ago, we ran an old, long, skinny photograph of two baseball teams about which we knew very little.

And when I say "old," I mean really old. The picture has to be 75 or 80 years old, at least. It was a curiosity.

That was the reason for running it. I was hoping someone out there among York Dispatch readers might recognize one of the 31 players, coaches, managers or umpires in the photo and have some knowledge of the occasion for the photograph.

And I promised I'd write a follow-up story with information received about the photo from baseball fans, former players, family members, etc.

Well, I did receive more than a dozen telephone calls and another eight or 10 e-mails about the picture. And the owner of the photo, Tim Heilman of Mount Wolf, talked with another dozen or so people who had their own thoughts about it.

What it comes down to is that we know as much (or as little) about the photo today as we did in April -- for an absolute fact.

That said, I think we might have narrowed it down to the point where we have an answer, but just can't quite claim 100 percent accuracy.

You might recall that Mount Wolf resident Odessa Benyak, 89, was for many years the caretaker of the photo after her father passed it down to her. She, in turn, passed it on to Heilman, thinking one of the men in a Mount Wolf baseball uniform might have been his father. It wasn't.

After sitting for many years in Heilman's closet, he turned it over to me. He was looking for some kind of answer.

So either Heilman or I talked to Brad Rentzel or Ror Witmer or Bud Harvey or Red Arnold or Mary Jane Reachard, who thought the ninth player on the left might have been her father, Cy Dixon (it wasn't) or Josh Bowers, who was certain one of the Mount Wolf players was his grandfather, Nelson Snyder (but I don't think so).

And every one of them had his or her own version of what the photo was all about. It was fun just considering all the possibilities, most of which were before my time, and Tim's, too.

A couple people thought the "Spring Grove" team was a former team sponsored by P.H. Glatfelter Co., in York County. It wasn't.

One believed the game was being played near the railroad tracks behind the old baseball field in Stewartstown. It wasn't.

Someone talked about Hanover. Someone talked about Jefferson. One spoke of games that were played 60 years ago in New Oxford. No, no and no.

And more than a couple people believed it might have been a game between Mount Wolf and Spring Grove, played on an old baseball diamond, either in Mount Wolf or Starview. Further investigation revealed that wasn't the case, however.

William Wolf, a longtime resident of Mount Wolf, a former baseball manager and a supporter of Mount Wolf baseball going way back, was fairly certain the site of the game on the photo was not any of the Mount Wolf fields he knew. But based on the style of the uniforms worn in the picture, he guessed it was a game played around 1925.

In the midst of all this sharing of information, I received a call from Glen Rock resident Jesse Mays. As it turns out, Mays was a bat boy for an amateur baseball team located in New Freedom in the 1930s -- I didn't know there had ever been a local team in New Freedom, but Mays swears the small southern York County town was the home of many outstanding teams back in the '20s and '30s.

And he remembered them well. He also recalled that back in those days local teams played against each other during the week and played tournaments on the weekends. He also knew there used to be a darned nice baseball team in Spring Grove, Md. -- "top-notch" is the word he used, "one of the best teams in Maryland."

Mays recalled traveling with his team down to Towson, Md., and playing against the Spring Grove team on the Sheppard-Pratt baseball field. The diamond no longer exists today, he said, but is situated on the campus of Towson State University along York Road.

It was semi-pro baseball at its best. Town team against town team. Tournaments included teams from New Freedom, West York, Hanover, McSherrystown, Littlestown and New Oxford in Pennsylvania, Baltimore County, Reisterstown and Glen Burnie.

Mays believes Mount Wolf might have traveled to Towson to play against Spring Grove (Maryland) in a tournament. And he thinks the photo was taken before the game was played.

It might not be the perfect answer, but I have a hunch it's pretty close to the truth. It makes more sense to me than anything else I've heard.

So that's my story, and I'm sticking to it. At least until someone comes along with a better theory.

It's the best I can do for now.

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