

# NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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## **BASEBALL AS AMERICA**

Organized by The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum  
Sponsored Nationally by Ernst & Young LLP

### **EXHIBITION OVERVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Scholar Gerald Early once wrote, “I think there are only three things that America will be known for 2,000 years from now when they study this civilization: the Constitution, jazz music and baseball. They’re the three most beautifully designed things this culture has ever produced.”

*Baseball As America* is the first major exhibition to examine the relationship between baseball and American culture. Our growth as a nation and a people is mirrored in the dugout, on the diamond, and throughout the bleachers.

#### **Core Themes**

Drawn from the renowned collection of The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York, the exhibition represents the richness of baseball as the great American pastime and celebrates enduring American values: freedom, patriotism, opportunity, and ingenuity.

Like a family album, our national game reflects our changing priorities and passions and our spirit and character. It has inspired many of our shared rituals and continues to mirror our unfolding story. In baseball, one can glimpse our entrepreneurial spirit, our values and self-image, and the tensions and triumphs of embracing diverse traditions while forging a sense of community.

*Baseball As America* appeals to a broad spectrum of the public – from children playing catch for the first time to the life-long fan – and, like the game itself, draws people of all ages and cultural heritages together.

#### **Walking through the Exhibition**

The exhibition is divided into seven sections: **Our National Spirit, Rooting for the Team, Sharing a Common Culture, Ideals and Injustices, Enterprise & Opportunity, Invention & Ingenuity**, and **Weaving Myths**.

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## ADD ONE/EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

**Our National Spirit** explores the sport's beginnings and shows how it has evolved into our national pastime. This section also explores the connection between patriotic symbolism and baseball. Here, visitors can view artifacts including FDR's "Green Light" letter calling for the continuation of professional baseball as a way to heighten morale during World War II, and baseball's most sacred relic – the Doubleday Ball from the mythic first game in 1839.

Visitors can delve into the traditions of the game as they venture through the **Rooting for the Team** section, which examines baseball rituals – hot dogs, the seventh-inning stretch, team colors, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," and more – that transform us from passive onlookers to parts of a team. This section features the original manuscript for "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," Harry Caray's eyeglasses, and the San Diego Chicken costume.

The following section focuses on baseball's influence in popular culture, as evidenced in movies (*Field of Dreams*), books (*The Natural*), clothing (baseball caps), phrases ("ballpark estimate"), and more. Artifacts in the **Sharing a Common Culture** section include the "Wonder Boy" bat from *The Natural*, a baseball-themed lunchbox, and a 1906 Victor recording of De Wolf hopper reading *Casey at the Bat*.

In the next section, **Ideals and Injustices**, visitors will see how baseball is a microcosm for changing attitudes about equality and opportunity. Guests can follow the stories of African-American, Jewish, Polish, Latino, Japanese, and female players. Artifacts include the original 1907 edition of *The History of Colored Base Ball*, items from the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, and Jackie Robinson's 1956 Brooklyn Dodgers jersey.

Since its 19<sup>th</sup> century inception, baseball has rapidly evolved from a game into a source of income and opportunity in America. Topics explored in the **Enterprise and Opportunity** section include player product endorsement, advertising, ballpark business, and labor unions. Here, guests can view baseball's most valuable card, the T206 Honus Wagner; a ball from the first series of baseball games to charge admission; and examples of product endorsements, from Babe Ruth's image on a store placard for Quaker products, to Ted Williams' fishing line, to a "Slammin' Sammy's" cereal box.

**Invention and Ingenuity** uncovers the scientific principles behind baseball and shows how the spirit of invention that nourished our nation's industrial and economic growth also contributed to the game's development. Artifacts shown here include the earliest known catcher's mask, the bat used by Babe Ruth for his record-breaking 60<sup>th</sup> home run in 1927, and oddball inventions that didn't make it to the major leagues, including a 1970s fluorescent orange baseball, which was intended to increase visibility.

In **Weaving Myths**, the larger-than-life stories of sports legends are detailed. Some baseball players and ballparks have become so iconic that they transcend the sport itself to become part of America's cultural consciousness. Here, visitors can reminisce about their favorite baseball icons while viewing artifacts such as the farewell trophy given to Lou Gehrig by his teammates, dirt saved from the ground of Ebbets Field, bricks from old Comisky Park, and shoes worn by "Shoeless Joe Jackson."

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ADD TWO/EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

**Philadelphia Connections**

*Baseball As America* also includes a special case dedicated to the rich baseball history of Philadelphia. Artifacts from 19<sup>th</sup> century baseball in Philadelphia, the Negro Leagues, the Philadelphia A's, and the Philadelphia Phillies are featured. In addition, all sections of the *Baseball As America* exhibition that pertain to Philadelphia sports history are denoted with a special label. Visitors can use a guide of the Philadelphia highlights to direct them through the exhibit. The final section of the exhibit also includes large photographs of great moments in Philadelphia baseball history.

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*Baseball As America*  
February 15 through May 11, 2008  
National Constitution Center in Philadelphia

Admission to *Baseball As America* is \$15 for adults, \$14 for seniors ages 65 and up, and \$9 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. Admission to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theater production "Freedom Rising", is included. iPod audio tours are also available and cost \$2 for members and \$3 for non-members. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

The national tour of *Baseball As America* is sponsored by Ernst & Young LLP. The exhibition is presented locally by Chevrolet. CBS 3 is the official media partner for the Center's showing of *Baseball As America* and the Philadelphia Phillies are a promotional partner for the exhibition.

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