

Play Ball!!!

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In doing research for the Missouri Special Edition of AAFA ACTION, I found we have a professional baseball player in the long list of Alvords. This is about William Charles Alvord who was born in St. Louis, MO. We have nothing further about him for either his ascendancy or descendancy.

The sources for this article are:

*Major League Players Association
Major League Players Association Alumni
Society for American Baseball Research
Baseball Almanac
Baseball-reference.com*

William Charles Alvord was born Aug. 1863 in St. Louis, St. Louis Co., MO. He had a nickname of "Uncle Bill."

He was known as "Billy" in baseball circles. His professional baseball career began on April 30, 1885, when he played his first game as a third-baseman for the St. Louis Maroons, then of the National Baseball League. The 22 year-old played for 5 seasons on 5 different teams and ended his big league playing career in 1893.

The Maroons played in the first Sportsman Park which is well known to Missouri, and many other, baseball fans. A later model of this stadium became home of both the St. Louis Browns and finally the St. Louis Cardinals in 1920 before they left for their current home in 1966.

It appeared as though Billy's career as a third-baseman was to be short-lived. He only played two games for the Maroons that first year. It was not very productive as he only had five at-bats; including one base-on-balls and two strikeouts. His fielding statistics may be indicative of why he was not seen again until 1889. In the two games he played he had two errors which turned into a .714 fielding percentage. This was not a good record in those days and even worse in the game today.

He re-appears in baseball record books in 1889 with the Kansas City Cowboys of the old American Association.

The American Association was the highest level (AAA) of farm teams for the major leagues.

He had more playing time here as he played a total of 50 games for the Cowboys that year. They were spread across the infield positions of second-base (8 games), third-base (34 games) and shortstop (8 games).

His batting average was .231 and his fielding percentage was improved to .834.

He was traded to the Toledo Maumees of the American Association, probably in the off-season. He played a total of 116 games in the 1890 season for Toledo. This was Billy's career year. He had a career-high batting average of .273 and his fielding improved to .872. This performance is probably the reason he appears back in the major leagues (National League) in 1891 with the Cleveland Spiders.

It appears from the record books that Cleveland was trying to find a third-baseman that year as they show six different players at that position. Billy played 20 games for the Spiders before going to the Washington Statesmen of the American Association. That is what they call 'a cup of coffee' in today's baseball lingo. It seems the Statesmen were a farm team for the Spiders.

It is interesting to note that Billy, while with the

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Spiders, played with a pitcher who was to become one of the greats of the game - Cy Young. In looking at records for that year, it certainly causes one to take notice of how the pitchers of today are, in their opinion, over-worked.

In 1891, Cy Young pitched 423 2/3 innings with 27 wins and 22 losses. Many pitchers now struggle to pitch 200 or more innings. Young had more complete games (43) than most of today's starting pitchers have starts in a season today. Where most teams have five starting pitchers today, the Spiders had three in 1891 and they pitched a total of 1,116 innings. Just interesting to see how the complexion of the game has changed in 115 years.

After going to the Statesmen, Billy settled in to become the regular third-baseman. His batting average of .234 was not as good but his fielding continued at a good level (.862).

For some reason, Billy was out of organized baseball in 1892. We have found nothing to indicate what may

have happened that year.

He reappears on the Spiders roster in 1893 along with a host of other third-basemen (seven to be exact). This was not a good year for Billy as he only played three games. His last appearance in Major League Baseball was on July 8, 1893.

His career statistics show him with a batting average of .253 with 31 doubles, 30 triples and 3 home runs. His career fielding percentage was .857. In looking at the record books, it appears these numbers are lower than what most managers and club owners were looking for. When one has committed 181 errors in 265 games, they will not be looked at favorably by management.

There is some speculation that Billy may have spent some time in Sacramento, CA, during the 1890 or 1893 season.

Billy died Jan. 1, 1900. Nothing more is known of William Charles Alvord from this time forward.