

Lady Moguls: A History of Women Who Have Owned Major League Baseball Teams

William A Cook



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Women have been part of the tradition and lore of the game of baseball for over the past one hundred and fifty years. The first organized women's team in the United States was started at Vassar College in 1866. Endless stories abound about women's participation in the grand old game in almost every capacity and have been well documented over the years in many published books. However this book is about an exclusive group of women in baseball history, some of them are well known, but most are not. These are women who have experienced the game from the very top as major league team owners and co-owners.

The history of women who have owned major league teams is more than a mere curiosity; their collective stories form an anthology of struggle in a male dominated bastion for acceptance and recognition as entrepreneurs and sports-minded individuals who understand the tradition of the game of baseball and it's ingrained connection to American culture.

It all began in 1911 when Helene Hathaway Robison Britton inherited the St. Louis Cardinals and the saga continued through the ensuing decades of the twentieth century with various women gaining control of major league teams through subsequent inheritances. Then in 1985 a watershed event occurred for women in major league baseball. Marge Schott gained majority control of the Cincinnati Reds, joining Jean Yawkey of the Boston Red Sox and Joan Kroc of the San Diego Padres thereby bringing the number of women to three who owned major league teams at that time.

While most of the woman who have owned major league teams gained control through inheritances, a few such as Joan Payson of the New York Mets and Marge Schott of the Cincinnati Reds, both of whom had strong independent interests in the game, gained majority control of their team with their own finances. A more recent co-owner who bought a considerable share of the Colorado Rockies with her own money is Linda Alvarado.

The degree to which the lady moguls have taken an active role in running their ball clubs is varied. Some such as Eleanor Hempstead who inherited the New York Giants chose to turn the reigns of leadership over to her husband. Others such Grace Comiskey of the Chicago White Sox and Florence Dreyfuss of the Pittsburgh Pirates, while not day-to-day hands-on owners were often involved with major decisions affecting their ball clubs. Marge Schott while very controversial was decidedly hands-on.

Also included in this work are stories of women team owners of color. Today, Negro League players are enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame and statistics of the leagues' most talented players appear in The Baseball Encyclopedia. Therefore to bridge the gap between the period of exclusion in major league baseball of players and owners of color and today's game, I have included in this work, two women who were involved with ownership and administration of Negro Leagues teams; Olivia Taylor of the Indianapolis ABC's and Effa Manley of the Newark Eagles. In fact in 2006, Effa Manley became the first women elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Collectively these remarkable women have added colorful, enriching and sometimes controversial experiences to the history of major league baseball. It is my hope that their legacy will continue to expand and to inspire women to make further inroads into both ownership and management of big league teams.

Contents:

- Helene Hathaway Robison Britton St. Louis Cardinals
- Effa Manley Newark Eagles
- Grace Reidy Comiskey Chicago White Sox
- Joan W. Payson New York Mets
- Jean R. Yawkey Boston Red Sox
- Marge Schott Cincinnati Reds
- Joan B. Kroc San Diego Padres
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