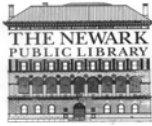


THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
5 WASHINGTON STREET, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102



PRESS RELEASE

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**Newark Public Library Exhibit Explores the Rise and Fall and Rise (again)
of Baseball in New Jersey**

Before the umpire shouts: "Play Ball!" it's time to take a side trip to the Newark Public Library where New Jersey's baseball tradition, from the Federal League Peppers to the modern incarnation of both affiliated and independent professional teams, is on display through June 27.

The Revival of Professional Baseball in New Jersey, an exhibit in the second-floor gallery of the Main Library, 5 Washington Street, Newark, highlights the return of baseball as a community activity in New Jersey, and encompasses every one of New Jersey's existing teams. It also showcases the history of baseball in New Jersey, from the first crack of the bat in Hoboken's Elysian Fields in 1846 to the glory days of the premier Negro League. Funding for this project comes from an Operating Support Grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.

"Through this exhibit, we can see that New Jersey has embraced its heritage and reasserted that it is a community that plays baseball," said Library Director Wilma J. Grey. "I credit the hard work of librarian James Lewis in the Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center, and Robert Golon, a librarian who is serving as a documents archivist at the Princeton Theological Seminary, for the success of this exhibit. There's fascinating memorabilia in every display case."

On Wednesday, May 6 at 6 p.m., the library will present a program featuring Golon, author of *No Minor Accomplishment: The Revival of New Jersey Professional Baseball*, to discuss the success of modern professional baseball in New Jersey. A film by Rider University communications major Bryan Persons, which explores and embraces New Jersey's eight professional teams, will be shown during the program.

Photographs, score cards and other memorabilia fill the cases of the second-floor gallery to highlight every existing New Jersey team. There are also cases devoted to New Jersey's baseball history, including pictures of the first professional team, the Newark Peppers. The Giants of Jersey City and Little Giants of Trenton are represented, as are the Newark Bears and the Newark Eagles; the latter played in the old Negro League.

There's a championship trophy for 1999 from the New Jersey Jackals and a huge map depicting current and past professional teams and their locations around the state.

Professional baseball in New Jersey suffered a decline—some would call it demise—from the 1950s through the 1980s. Golon attributes this partially to the advent of television and boom in broadcast games that made major league ball played in other parts of the country accessible to New Jersey's residents.

Now, New Jersey boasts seven professional teams: the New Jersey Jackals and the Sussex Skyhawks (both independents associated with the Can-Am League); the Camden Riversharks, the Newark Bears and the Somerset Patriots in Bridgewater (all independents associated with the Atlantic League); the South Atlantic League Lakewood BlueClaws; and the Eastern League's Trenton Thunder, an affiliate of the New York Yankees. Each has its own marketing strategies to attract and retain fans from season to season. And since the day the Trenton Thunder took the field at Waterfront Park in 1994 in an effort to help revitalize New Jersey's capital city, the teams have had varying degrees of success.

The Lakewood BlueClaws, a South Atlantic League affiliate and a Philadelphia Phillies development team, may be the most successful minor league team in New Jersey. Attendance, which may be due to the availability of \$7 seats, soars every summer.

Only one team, the Atlantic City Surf, associated with the Can-Am League, has ceased playing. It announced it was shuttering the stadium just last month after a 10-year struggle to build a fan base and draw crowds.

"There are many reasons why baseball made a comeback in New Jersey," Golon explained. Expense could be one reason: "People are hesitant to pay the prices charged by the major league teams for tickets and memorabilia. And the new ballparks built for each team are comfortable and family friendly. It's more than just baseball that draws people to the stadiums; it's a nice night out."

To RSVP for the May 6 program, please call 973-733-7793 or email rsvp@npl.org and put "baseball program" in the subject line.