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All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Collection, 1945-1952, 1976-2020, undated

(Part of the Kathleen Bertrand and Linda Lundin,
Honoring Women in Sports Collection)
(MSS-049.01.01)

*Finding Aid Compiled by
Elizabeth Ezekiel, 2022*



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All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Administrative History

The creation of the league was led by Philip K. Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs and the Wrigley Company. In the wake of young, able-bodied men being drafted into the Second World War, Wrigley feared that Major League Baseball park attendance would fall if too many big-name players were drafted. Wrigley brought in Ken Shells, assistant to the Chicago Cubs' General Manager, and together they created a committee that worked to solve the problem of the potential disenfranchisement of the MLB. Their solution? The creation of the non-profit All-American Girls Softball League (AAGSL) in spring 1943. The first Board of Trustees for the AAGSL included: Phillip K. Wrigley, Branch Rickey, Paul V. Harper, and Ken Shells, named president of the league.

Midway through the inaugural season, the league changed its name to the All-American Girls Base Ball League both to distinguish itself from pre-existing softball leagues and because the rules they followed were similar to those of Major League Baseball. At the close of the 1943 season, the league incurred another name change, becoming the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL). Two years later in 1945, the league reverted back to the All-American Girls Base Ball League (AAGBBL), which remained the name until 1950. It was during this five-year period that overhand pitching and smaller ball sizes were adopted. In 1950, when independent teams began to buy out the league, the name became the American Girls Baseball League (AGBL). However, it was more commonly referred to as the All-American League or the All-American Girls Base Ball League. It was not until the late 1980s, through the efforts of the Player's Association to be recognized by the National Baseball Hall of Fame that the name had one final, most accurate, name change, returning to the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL).

The first four cities chosen to host teams in 1943 were Racine and Kenosha Wisconsin, Rockford, Illinois, and South Bend, Indiana. Teams consisted of fifteen players, a manager/coach, a business manager, and a woman chaperone. Often, notable men's sports players managed the AAGPBL teams, as it was believed that their names would bring more traction (money) to the league. The women chaperones handled the daily business of their team, coordinated player transportation, living arrangements, among other duties. In 1943, player salaries ranged from \$45 to \$85 per week (or more), and players were as young as 15. In addition to their ball play, femininity and aesthetics remained high priority. After spring training practices, players were required to attend the Helena Rubenstein's Beauty Salon (Chicago, IL) for evening 'charm' classes. These courses taught proper social etiquette, personal hygiene, and dress code, both on and off the field. Players were mandated to follow the beauty standards set by the league. Contemporary historians can acknowledge these standards as part of the over-sexualization of women athletes during the mid-century.

AAGPBL teams were primarily based out of the Midwest but contained players from across the country. The league grew to have fifteen teams throughout its eleven-year run. The teams of the AAGPBL included: the Springfield Sallies (IL), Battle Creek Belles (MI), Chicago Colleens (IL), Fort Wayne Daisies (IN), Grand Rapids Chicks (MI), Kalamazoo Lassies (MI), Kenosha Comets (WI), Milwaukee Chicks (WI), Minneapolis Millerettes (MN), Muskegon Belles (MI),

Muskegon Lassies (MI), Peoria Redwings (IL), Racine Belles (WI), Rockford Peaches (IL), and the South Bend Blue Sox (IN). Both the Springfield Sallies and the Chicago Colleens were considered rookie teams. At its close in 1954, only five teams remained: Fort Wayne, South Bend, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Rockford.

In the aftermath of World War II, AAGPBL teams were able to travel greater distances for spring training: Pascagoula, Mississippi in 1946; Havana, Cuba in 1947; and Opalocka, Florida in 1949. Between 1945-48, crowds amassed between two and three thousand fans per game. Attendance peaked during the 1948 season, when just ten teams attracted 910,000 paying fans. Following this season, game attendance started to decline as more teams were independently, rather than centrally, run. This slow disbandment of the league resulted in general disorganization, less effective game advertisements, and fewer new players recruited. Moreover, Major League Baseball games were televised beginning in the 1950s, and fans were drawn to this form of free entertainment rather than paying to go see an AAGPBL game.

The league formally disbanded in 1954. Throughout its eleven-year history, over 600 women had the opportunity to play professional baseball. Since 1954, the AAGPBL has been a topic of Hollywood interest, culminating in the 1992 movie *A League of Their Own*, starring Geena Davis, Madonna, and Tom Hanks.

For further reading:

League History:

<https://www.aagpbl.org/history/league-history>

Season Timelines and Records:

<https://www.aagpbl.org/seasons>

League Structure:

<https://www.aagpbl.org/history/league-structure>

Rules of Play:

<https://www.aagpbl.org/history/rules-of-play>

Beauty Standards and Charm School:

<https://www.aagpbl.org/history/charm-school>

All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Scope and Content Note

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League collection is part of the larger *Kathleen Bertrand and Linda Lundin, Honoring Women in Sports Collection*.

This multi-media collection contains a variety of primary and reproduction materials related to the history of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. These materials include paper media with league-specific news (Series 1), a growing collection of AAGPBL newsletters (Series 2), player write-ups and AAGPBL news in non-league media (Series 3), and reproduction materials (Series 4). The reproduction materials include 248 AAGPBL team photographs, all 4"x6" or 5"x7", with many player names identified on the back, and 24 league photographs sized 8.5"x11" and 11"x17". Paper materials include programs, one score card, one 1950 schedule for the Racine Belles, and one league contract for Mary Pratt. Other media include one reproduction AAGPBL logo patch, a complete reproduction Racine Belles uniform, one Rockford Peaches pennant, and two scrapbooks. The replication advertisement for the Rockford Peaches home game at Beyer Stadium contains original signatures of players Mary Pratt, Maddy English, and Marie Mansfield.

The strengths of this collection include primary copies of news and press releases spanning the 1940s – the current era, an extensive collection of reproduction photographs, and an expanding collection of AAGPBL newsletters that trace the history and events of the league. This collection is unique both in the historical material it holds, which is sparsely, if at all, available online, and the variety of media represented in this collection.

Related collections include: The many sub-collections within the *Kathleen Bertrand and Linda Lundin, Honoring Women in Sports Collection*. AAGPBL individual player collections include the [*Margaret "Marge" Russo Collection*](#); the [*Joanne "Jo" Winter Collection*](#); the [*Mary Pratt Collection*](#); and the [*Madeline "Maddy" English Collection*](#).

All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Series Descriptions

Series 1: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League-Specific News, 1945-1952, 1982-2003, undated

This series contains a variety of paper media with news specific to the AAGPBL. These paper materials include books, pamphlets, programs, flyers, brochures, magazines, among others. The news in these materials relates to player reunions, in-person events, league histories, and player biographies. This series also contains primary materials from the years the AAGPBL was active, including two magazines and one newspaper.

Series 2: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Newsletters, 1982-1992, 2004-2020

This series contains a collection of newsletters ranging from 1982-2020 and is predominantly the “Touching Bases” newsletter of the AAGPBL. The newsletters date between 1982-1992, and 2004-2020. Currently there are no newsletters between the years 1993-2003 in this collection. This series will expand as more recent editions of “Touching Bases” are published and donated to the collection.

Series 3: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Write-Ups in Non-League Media, 1946, 1976, 1987-1999, undated

This series contains write-ups about the AAGPBL published in non-league specific media. Such media include *Women Sports* magazine, *Smithsonian* magazine, the *Boston Sunday Herald* newspaper, among others. This series also contains undated player write-ups from an assortment of publications.

Series 4: Reproduction Material, bulk undated

This series contains a variety of reproduction material, including photographs, programs, advertisements, two scrapbooks, and a player uniform, among others. Note that the replication advertisement for the Rockford Peaches home game contains original signatures of players Mary Pratt, Maddy English, and Marie Mansfield.

All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Box and Folder List

Series 1: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League-Specific News, 1945-1952, 1982-2003, undated

Box 1 Folder

1. [2] *Major League Baseball*, Dell books, AAGPBL statistics and player of the year in rear of each book, 1946, 1947
2. [2] *Major League Baseball*, Dell books, AAGPBL statistics and player of the year in rear of each book, 1948, 1949
3. 40th anniversary reunion pamphlet, Sept./Oct. 1982, no. 15
4. AAGPBL souvenir program, out of FT. Wayne, Indiana, sent to Madeline English, 1986
5. 45th anniversary reunion, booklet and flyer, October 4-8, 1988
6. "A League Comes Home," AAGPBL news pamphlet, 1992, Contains information on 1993 50th year reunion
7. 50th anniversary reunion program, schedule, membership report, August 4-8, 1993
8. "New Agenda: Northeast" pamphlets/ephemera, 1995
9. AAGPBL players reunion program, Milwaukee, August 2000
10. A Tribute to the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, flyer, Milwaukee County Stadium, August 26, 2000
11. AAGPBL players reunion program, Grand Rapids, September 2001
12. *Leagues of Their Own*, Michigan Sports Heritage Exhibition, brochure, Feb. 1 – Sept. 1, 2003
13. 60th anniversary reunion program, September 10-13, 2003
14. "A Night All Their Own" event program, undated
15. [2] "Diamond Gals: The Story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League", short book, 1986, written by Sharon Roepke
16. The AAGPBL Player's Association Bylaws, 1993
17. Selected league bibliographies, undated
18. "The History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League", long write-up, undated
19. "Girls on the Diamond" pamphlet, undated
20. *Girls of Summer: The History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*, written by Sharon Roepke, (short write-up for a MLB game program), 2000

Box 2

- Newspaper – *Kenosha Evening News*, contains articles about the AAGPBL, 4 issues, June 1, 4 – 6, 1945
- *Life Magazine*, June 4, 1945, write-up on AAGPBL pages 63-64
- *Holiday Magazine*, June 1952, contains article titled "World's Prettiest Ballplayers"

Series 2: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Newsletters, 1982-1992, 2004-2020

Box 3

Folder

1. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1982-1984, 4 items
2. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1986, 2 items
3. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1987, 4 items
4. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1988, 6 items
5. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1989, 3 items
6. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1990, 3 items
7. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1991, 4 items
8. AAGPBL Assorted News, 1992, 2 items, sent from Mary Pratt to Madeline English
9. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, January 2004, vol. 4, issue 1
10. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, January 2006, vol. 6, issue 1
11. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, September 2006, vol. 6, issue 3
12. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, September 2007, vol. 7, issue 3
13. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May 2008, vol. 8, issue 2
14. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, September 2008, vol. 8, issue 3
15. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May 2009, vol. 9, issue 2
16. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, September 2009, vol. 9, issue 3
17. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Jan/Feb 2013, vol. 13, issue 1
18. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May/June 2013, vol. 13, issue 2
19. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Sept/Oct 2013, vol. 13, issue 3
20. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Jan/Feb 2014, vol. 14, issue 1
21. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May/June 2014, vol. 14, issue 2
22. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Sept/Oct 2014, vol. 14, issue 3

Box 4

Folder

1. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Jan/Feb 2015, vol. 15, issue 1
2. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Sept/Oct 2015, vol. 15, issue 3
3. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, Jan/Feb 2016, vol. 16, issue 1
4. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May/June 2016, vol. 16, issue 2
5. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, May/June 2017, vol. 17, issue 1
6. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, August 2020, vol. 19, issue 1
7. "Touching Bases," newsletter of the AAGPBL, December 2020, vol. 19, issue 2

Series 3: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Write-Ups in Non-League Media, 1946, 1976, 1987-1999, undated

Box 5

Folder

1. *Deb* magazine, September 1946
2. *Women Sports* magazine, April 1976
3. *Basewoman Newsletter*, no. 5 (Oct. 1987) and no. 19 (Dec. 1988)
4. [2] *Smithsonian* magazine, vol. 20, no. 4, July 1989
5. *Boston Sunday Herald* newspaper, January 26, 1992
6. *Scholastic Scope* magazine, vol. 40, no. 17, April 3, 1992
7. Fenway Park *Scorebook Magazine*, 1993, 2nd ed., Article "Strikes, Skirts and Strawberries: New England Women Remember Major League Years"
8. *Public Museum of Grand Rapids* magazine, summer 1994
9. *Bostonia: The Alumni Quarterly of Boston University*, winter '98-99
10. Brief write-ups on players Pratt and English, undated
11. "The Grand Rapids Visitor" Guide for visitors, contains write-ups on AAGPBL, undated
12. Write-ups of players and AAGPB from assorted publications, reproductions/copied, undated

Series 4: Reproduction Material, bulk undated

Box 6

Folder

1. Rockford Peaches Team Photographs [91]
2. Racine Belles Team Photographs [42]
3. Kenosha Comets Team Photographs [16]
4. South Bend Blue Sox Team Photographs [26]
5. Ft. Wayne Daisies Team Photographs [10]
6. Muskegon Lassies Team Photographs [5]
7. Grand Rapids Chicks Team Photographs [21]
8. Milwaukee Chicks Team Photographs [1]
9. Minneapolis Millerettes Team Photographs [1]
10. Peoria Redwings Team Photographs [4]
11. Kalamazoo Lassies Team Photographs [12]
12. Battle Creek Belles Team Photographs [2]
13. Chicago Colleens Team Photographs [4]
14. Springfield Sallies Team Photographs [3]
15. All Star Team Photographs [2] and Spring Training Photographs [1]
16. South American Tour Team Photographs, 1948 [8]

Box 7

Folder

1. Reproduced 8.5"x11" league photographs [16]
2. Reproduction 11"x17" league photographs [8]
3. Official Program All-American Girls Soft-Ball League, copy of 1943 first official program
4. Max-Carey AAGPBL program, Habana, undated, copy
5. Official score card, Racine Belles, 1943, copy
6. Official 1950 schedule, Racine Belles, copy
7. All-American Girls Base-Ball League contract with Mary Pratt, undated, copy
8. Reproduction AAGPBL logo patch
 - Gals in Sports scrapbook of AAGPBL, 1943-1954 (reproduction made circa 2004)
 - Baseball card album – approximately 400 cards of AAGPBL players, created between 1995-2000

Box 8

- Reproduction AAGPBL complete uniform, Racine Belles, date unknown

Oversize Flat-File folder

- Rockford Peaches pennant
- Rockford Peaches home-game advertisement for Beyer Stadium, undated; contains original signatures of Mary Pratt, Maddy English, Marie Mansfield
- List of all players who played in the AAGPBL, printed 1997