
Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

November 2015

PROMENSCHENCKEL PARK IN DUNKIRK

By Paul V. Lutz

The Dunkirk Observer

(from the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame archives)

Promenschenckel Park, the baseball field that was located on Oak Street at Point Gratiot, was a very busy and popular place during the '20s and early '30s.

Semi-pro teams supported by local businesses and touring semi-pro teams played there and did attract quite an enthusiastic crowd. My dad attended the games whenever he could, and he would comment about the local people traveling to Cleveland and New York City to see Babe Ruth hit home runs while missing some of the real pitcher's duels, often going more than 12 innings, being played in Dunkirk.



1928 Dunkirk Alcos – WNY Semi-pro champions - front: Travis, Hoepfner, Robinson, Long, Knanik, Moreeno – rear: Hayes, Panowicz, Zientek, Lillie, Murphy, Mohart, Matteson

Fran "Frenchy" Panowicz and his brother Al Panowicz along with Harry Lautenslaker were star players who attracted big league team scouts. Harry was one of the finest left-handed pitchers in the league, while "Frenchy" and Al Panwoicz dominated the infield.

If the economic times had been different, Dunkirk would have been well represented nationally by their baseball players. The ball park closed down, as most of the teams lost their sponsors due to the Depression. A ball field, without a grandstand or extensive bleachers, was set up on Lake Shore Drive West near Crooked Brook. It was bordered by a thick hedge about 8 feet tall that trapped long balls and made it difficult for out-fielders to throw into the basemen. The economy and World War II closed that park.

During the '50s Dan Rusch, Joe Pietro and Barnett & Straser teamed up to buy the land, take out the hedge and construct the Dunkirk Motel. Baseball games were then played at sandlots in the First and Fourth Wards.



1929 Chautauqua County champions – St. Joseph's of Dunkirk – back row: Petz, Ahlsrom, Valone, Fabritius, Rushboldt, Hayes, Miga – front row: Lupone, Depledge, Moreeno, Miller, Panowicz, Morrissey, Szukala – grass: Taddio

The ballpark at Point Gratiot began to disintegrate through non-use and the space under the granstand was used for storage of a disassembled carousel that tempted Jim Lautenslaker, Bob Briggs and I, along with Tulio Oliveri and sometimes Art Casella, to sneak in and play on the horses and have pretend races or cowboy chases.

Our exiting the building not always went unnoticed, for oft times as we walked down Oak Street toward the old park pavilion, we would hear the crack and zip, and see the small spurt of dust from the .22 caliber slug hitting the cinder road ahead of us.

A person called "Shadow" was taking our measure from an attic window of the hotel adjoining the stadium. Even though we were familiar with "Shadow" and knew that all he had was a single shot rifle, he was also a poor shot and might hit one of us by chance. We would spread out and run into the thicket that bordered Oak Street. Fortunately for us, "Shadow" didn't shoot at anything he couldn't see clearly.

It was only a matter of time before someone torched the stadium. I am not certain if it went up before or after the skating rink located near the cliffs was torched.

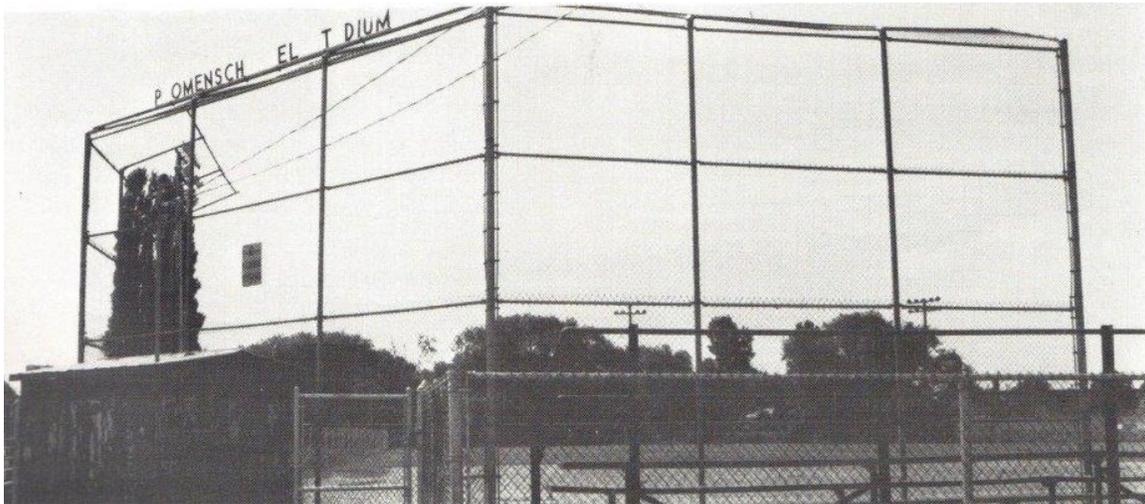
Both of these destructions were preceded by the torching of the bandstand near the skating rink. That served as a notice that more public enjoyment buildings were going to be lost.

It was a shame to lose the carousel figures.

During the middle '40s, the old park pavilion was turned into a skating rink by Peter Vitello and his partner Russ. Jim Lautenslaker and I became the first "Skate Boys" employed.

Our pay was slight but we had free skating, soda pop and an inside track with the girl skaters. Our days as "Wall Flowers" were over!

CSHOF POSTSCRIPT: Although the original Promenschenkel Park at Point Gratiot as described in Paul Lutz's story above is gone, a softball stadium by the same name exists in Dunkirk today (photo below).



Class of 2016 Inductees

The Board of Directors of the CSHOF began the process of selecting the inductees for the Class of 2016 on September 1. With over 130 active nominations currently on file, the task of the Directors is

daunting. The names of the members of the Class of 2016 will be announced on December 1. The 35th Annual Induction Banquet will be held Monday, February 15, at the Lakewood Rod and Gun Club.

Spotlight on Volunteers



Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame. The officers and directors of the CSHOF give freely of their time without compensation; yet there is also another group of exceptional individuals without whom the organization could not exist. The following people donate several hours each month to help keep our exhibition hall doors open: **Dee Rewers, Patty Rewers, Nancy Huckabone, Don Long, Louise Long, Del Seekings, Larry Marvell, Bruce**

Widen, Sue Ottaway, Judy Prechtl, Tom Priester, Tim Johnson and Nancy Schuyler. To them we say thank you. You are sincerely appreciated.

The CSHOF is in need of additional volunteers to greet visitors Monday through Friday, from 12-3 PM. If you can help out, even one day a month, kindly contact Randy Anderson at 640-6219.

November Home Basketball Schedule

Men

- *Saturday, November 7 vs Mansfield (Exhibition) at 4:00
- *Friday, November 13 vs Binghamton at 8:00
- Saturday, November 21 vs Loyola (MD) at 7:00
- Saturday, November 28 vs Hofstra at 4:00

Women

- *Saturday, November 7 vs Edinboro (Exhibition) at 1:30
 - *Friday, November 13 vs Siena at 5:30
 - Tuesday, November 24 vs Detroit at 5:00
 - Sunday, November 29 vs Toledo at 1:00
- *Men's and Women's Doubleheader

Men's Single-Game Tickets start at \$6 (Bronze), \$8 (Silver), and \$10 (Gold)

Women's Tickets: \$5 for adults/\$3 for ages 17 and under

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