

Baseball in the Capital City

BASEBALL RETURNED to downtown St. Paul in 2015 with the unveiling of CHS Field, the new home of the St. Paul Saints. Part of the revitalization of the city's Lower-town district, the new ballpark is located a long (very long) fly ball's distance away from a baseball diamond that occupied a nearby site nearly 150 years ago. The Olympic Base Ball Club of St. Paul played at a field near the intersection of Ninth and Olive Streets in the late 1850s.

As Stew Thornley describes in his new book, *The St. Paul Saints: Baseball in the Capital City*, the American pastime has a long and distinguished legacy in St. Paul, going back to the earliest years of statehood and extending through various clubs, leagues, and ballparks. While the current incarnation of the Saints—best known for its “Fun Is Good” mantra inspired by fun-loving owners Mike Veeck and Bill Murray—has been entertaining baseball crowds since 1993, the original team traces its origins to the late-nineteenth century.

In the early 1900s, these Saints played in another long-gone downtown ballpark, located in the block formed by Robert, Minnesota, 12th, and 13th Streets, just southeast of where the capitol was then being built. Known affec-



Young fans and a Coca-Cola vendor at Midway Stadium, 1957
(MNHS COLLECTIONS)

tionately as the Pillbox, the Downtown Ball Park served as the Saints' primary home for several years before the club became full-time residents at Lexington Park, about two miles west of downtown. Playing in the American Association, the team remained at Lexington for nearly another half-century before moving into the first Midway Stadium for their final four seasons (1957–60).

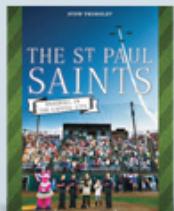
A new Midway Stadium (originally called Municipal Stadium) was built nearby on Energy Park Drive in 1982, and when Veeck and Murray established their St. Paul Saints as part of the upstart, independent Northern League in 1993, they settled into that ballpark.

Midway Stadium would be the site of countless memorable moments during its 22 seasons as the Saints' home, from the various incarnations of the team's official “ball pig” to theme nights like Inflatable Bat Night (sponsored by Viagra) and other creative promotions. The team is bringing that same spirit of fun and irreverence to CHS Field, and downtown St. Paul is once again a baseball destination.

—Josh Leventhal, MNHS Press



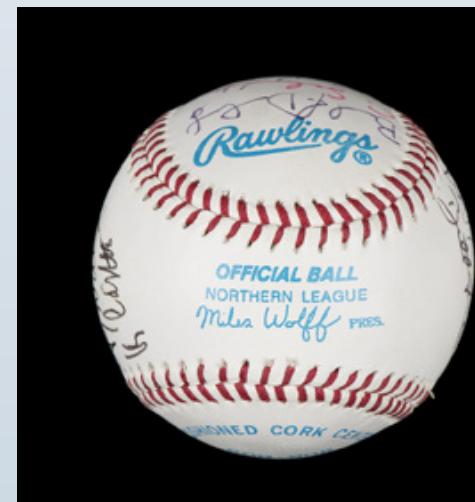
St. Paul Saints team photo, 1903 (MNHS COLLECTIONS)



Find out more . . .

For more on the Saints and the history of baseball in St. Paul, check out Stew Thornley's *The St. Paul Saints: Baseball in the Capital City* in the MNHS museum store or online.

Official Northern League baseball, autographed by 1999 Saints players
(MNHS COLLECTIONS/
JASON ONERHEIM PHOTO)





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