

# Amateur Baseball's "Golden Years" in Northwest Georgia

*Amateur Baseball flourished in the Tri-State Area between 1925 and the late 1950s, and was a showcase for future minor and major league players.*



—Photo by Ward's Photo Service.

**PENNANT WINNING TEAM**—Pictured is the Tunnel Hill Paramount Dairies team which won the 1955 pennant in the North Georgia League. They are, front row, from the left, Billy Gowin, J. C. Horne, "Doc" Jay, Jim Callaway, Bob Davis, Jerry Albertson, Harry O'Neal and Larry Davis; back row, Bill Middleton, Jack Jay, Edwin Rann, Jim Middleton, Robert Lofty, Howard Sims and Lamont Nuckolls, manager. Tunnel Hill will play Riceville in the District Series this afternoon at Darwin Field at 3 o'clock.

*The North Georgia League Pennant Winning 1955 Team from Tunnel Hill*

## Amateur Baseball's Golden Years in Northwest Georgia

By Roger Bowman

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Records indicate that the North Georgia League was established in 1923 with six teams (Alton Park, Davenport Hosiery, Trion, Lafayette, Chickamauga, and Berryton). As would be the case throughout the story of these local leagues, membership from year to year was fluid based upon sponsorships and local interest and support. Also, through the history of these leagues up through the 1950s, the names of these clubs/teams were sometimes the name of the city or community and sometimes carried the name of the sponsors.

A 1936 newspaper article revealed some of the teams and sponsors including: Rome Hosiery, Chickamauga Crystals (Crystal Springs Bleachery), Rome Bakers and Chickamauga Home

Interest in all baseball was highest in the 1950s. The postwar (WWII) excitement of being able to focus on the national pastime brought a new level of play, fan interest, newspaper coverage and radio broadcasts to a population eager for a positive experience. Reports in great detail on local amateur play, minor-league and major league play filled the sports pages.

This was high quality baseball featuring former high school standouts, college players, aspiring professional players and former professionals. There were several Catoosa County players from the 1950 era who would go on to play professional baseball. These include Thomas "Tink" Bowman with the Cleveland Indians, Roy Hawes with the Washington Senators and Jim Callaway with the Milwaukee Braves.

In the 1950 season there were nine leagues in the Tri-State area with three of these in Northwest Georgia. Graysville, Boynton, Tunnel Hill, and Ringgold played in the Lookout Valley League, Chickamauga and Dalton played in the City League and Murray County had their own league with six teams.

The 1955 pennant winning team in the North Georgia League was Tunnel Hill which actually carried the name of their sponsor, Paramount Dairies, on their uniforms. Many Ringgold residents were members of this team, including Jim Callaway, Bob Davis, "Doc" Jay and Jack Jay.

With various local leagues, teams from Tunnel Hill, Ringgold and Boynton played in several different leagues between the 1920s and the 1950s. This included the Chattanooga City League, North Georgia League, and Lookout Valley League. During this time there was also inter-league play as these amateur teams worked to fill their schedules.

Newspaper articles from this era reveal that there was a lot of zeal and competitiveness. In June of 1950 the Chattanooga Times reported *"In a game marked by continuous arguments and near fisticuffs, Boynton rallied for five runs in the top of the ninth to down a stubborn last-place Ringgold at Ringgold in the Lookout Valley League"*.

Another amusing anecdote was from a report from a game in June of 1954 that reads *"Dalton won the first-half championship in the North Georgia League yesterday. Dalton was leading Tunnel Hill 10-3 in the top of the eighth when umpire Clarence "Bull" Davis forfeited the game to Dalton after Tunnel Hill's pitcher refused to use the ball given to him by the umpire"*.

Nicknames for players were quite popular in the day. Another June 1950 clipping with the headline "Boynton Wins 8<sup>th</sup> in Lookout Valley", we see the player names "Mulehead" and "Juice".

Baseball reporters in the 1950s were colorful in their reporting, which added additional entertainment value to their reports. An article in the June 12, 1950, issue of the Chattanooga Daily Times stated *"the win was the ninth straight for Boynton and kept their record unblemished. Van Yates had three hits for the losers. Ringgold pulled a triple play in the third inning when R. F. Jay made a nice catch of a liner, and fast relaying turned the catch into a triple killing."*

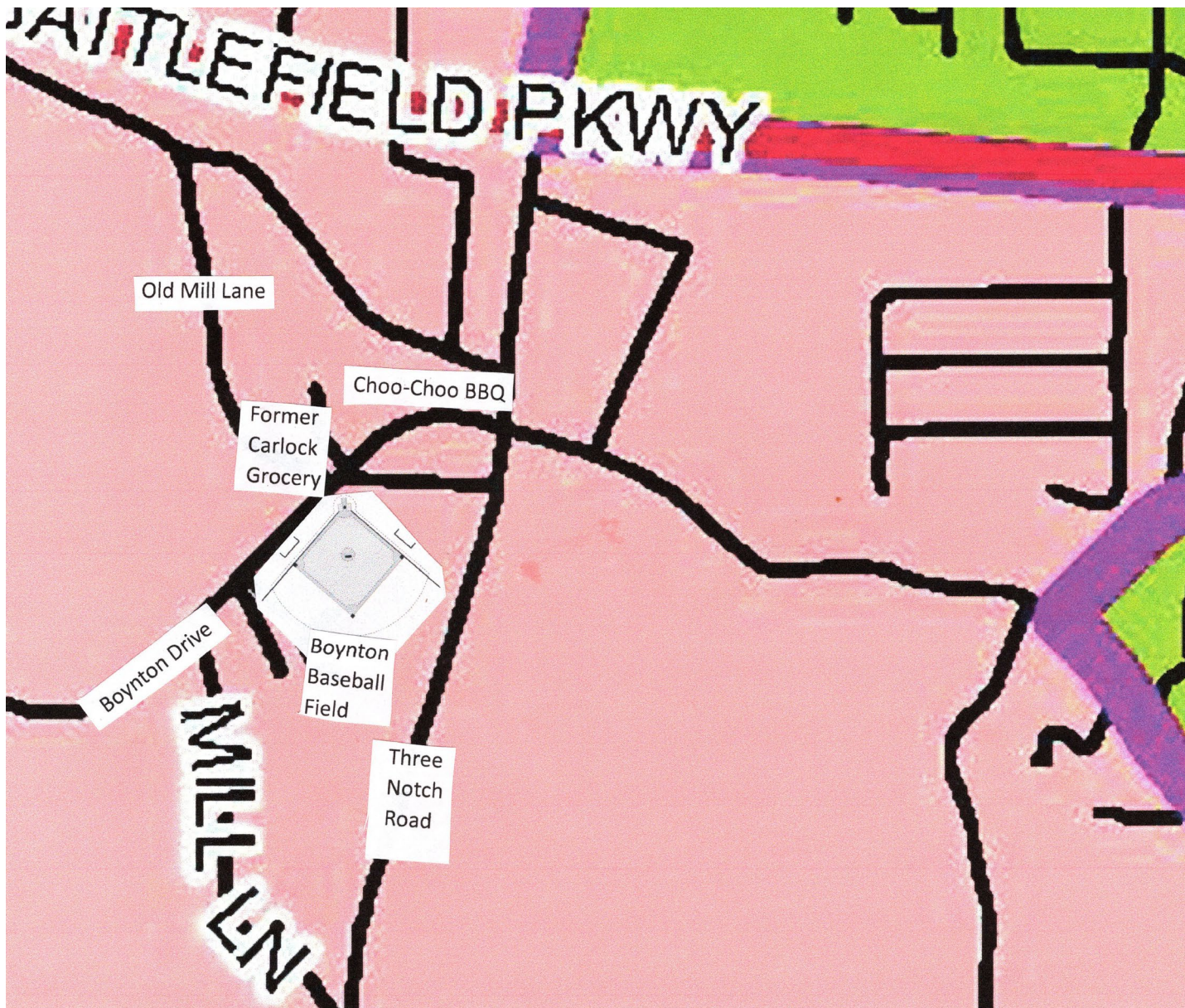


—Times Staff Photo by Max Keister.

**DISTRICT AMATEUR BASEBALL CHAMPS**—Members of the Boynton baseball team, which won the District Amateur Baseball Series title and also the championship of the City League, are pictured. Kneeling, left to right, Ronald Wells, second baseman; Charlie Kell, pitcher; Abe Brock, third baseman; C. L. Powell, catcher. Standing, left to right, Luther Wells, secretary; R. M. Robertson, manager; Dec Bridges, first baseman; Buster Irwin, shortstop; Doc Reavley, outfielder; Walt Bridges, outfielder; Joe Carlock, business manager; J. C. Russell, president. Other members not in picture are Wendell Dunningan, Leon Hardeman, Harry Adams, Herman Beagles, L. B. Hadden, Buck Williams.

In 1950 (above) Boynton played in the City League, with Ringgold and Tunnel Hill in the Lookout Valley League.

## Location of Boynton Baseball Field in the 1950s



The Boynton Baseball Field stood for years across Boynton Drive from (then) Carlock's Grocery. Mr. Joe Carlock was the long-time business manager for the team.

In the 1953 articles below, two players for Boynton who will sign future major league contracts (Jim Callaway and Tink Bowman).

A February 7, 1950, newspaper article in the Chattanooga Daily Times announced a meeting at Carlock's Grocery for the purpose of team organization for the coming season.

# BOYNTON TRIUMPHS AS BOWMAN FANS 13

## Tink Has 5-Hitter as City Titlists Post 13-3 Win Over All-Star Club

With Tink Bowman hurling a brilliant five-hitter and whiffing 13, Boynton defeated the City Baseball League All-Stars, 13 to 3, Saturday night at Darwin Field. Approximately 700 fans attended the big program.

Jim Calloway, with three for four, including a double, led Boynton's attack, Buster Erwin and Charles Bonine chipped in with two hits each for the first-half winners in the City circuit.

Rudy Simpson, Builders' ace hurler, opened on the hill for the Stars and hurled three runless innings. Jack Davis, Cobble pitcher, took over mound duties in the fourth and received credit for the loss. Davis was removed in the sixth inning and Dalton's Oscar O'Bryant finished in the box for the Stars.

Simpson was a standout afield for the Stars after switching over to shortstop in the fourth inning.

Before the game, short talks were made by Parks Commissioner George McInturff, City League President Curtis Hixon and Cleveland Scout Joe Sewell. McInturff praised the East Lake Lions for sponsoring the game and suggested that the all-star attraction may be what is needed to bring amateur baseball here to an improved standing.

# RICHARDSON HURLS FOR ACES TONIGHT

## All-Stars Meet Boynton at Darwin Field—Prelim Is Girls' Tilt at 7

Robbie Robertson's Boynton club, first-half champion of the City Amateur Baseball League, meets a City League all-star team at Darwin Field tonight in the feature attraction of a program sponsored by the East Lake Lions Club.

The program will get under way with a girls' softball game at 7 o'clock, Interstate vs Provident. A brief home-plate ceremony and music by the City High band will come between games.

Dan McNally, manager of the All-Stars, announced the following starting line-up for tonight's game:

2B—George McBee, East Lake  
1B—Bill Schulte, East Lake  
SS—Brindle, Dalton  
3B—Bob Lusk, Builders  
LF—Jim Brenizer, Builders  
CF—R. L. Clark, East Lake  
RF—Fremo Ross, Builders  
C—Jerry Albertson, Dalton  
P—LaFayette Richardson, Dalton

### Boynton's line-up:

SS—Martell Dooley  
2B—Jim Turner or Jim Calloway  
RF—George McBee  
1B—Jack Case or Dee Bridges  
3B—Herman Beagles or Earl Richardson  
LF—Buster Erwin or Wendell Dunagan  
CF—Charlie Bonine  
C—LeRoy Brock  
P—Marvin Stephens, Tink Bowman,  
Bill Evans, and Wayne Morris  
Utility—J. A. Daniels and Ty Coppinger

## North Georgia

In the North Georgia League, Rossville strengthened its hold on second place by shutting out Rock Springs 10-0 in a game called at the end of the eighth by agreement. Joe Holsomback had a three-hitter working at the time. D. Edmonds and Hoyt Jenkins each had a pair of hits for Rossville and Vernon Moore had three.

In the only other game reported Tunnel Hill buried West Lafayette 24-8. Doc Jay, with a home run, triple and single; Jim Callaway with two singles, a double, a triple, and Jack Hall with a home run led the winners in the 23-hit assault.

The hitting prowess of the 1955 Tunnel Hill Team is recounted in this article citing the hitting of Jim Callaway and Doc Jay. At the time Jim Callaway was on the University of Georgia baseball team and Doc Jay went on to Spring Training with the New York Yankees and was offered a contract but chose instead to return to Ringgold and start his family.



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This pennant winning Tunnel Hill team of 1955 featured popular Ringgold players: Charles W. "Doc" Jay, Jim Callaway, Bob Davis, and Jack Jay.

#### References:

Chattanooga Daily Times  
Personal Papers and Interviews with James D. "Jim" Callaway  
Author's personal memories as a young baseball fan in Ringgold