

A Schott From The Bleachers

Yankees Played in New Orleans Before New York

by

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The American League was organized and completed its first season in 1901. The eight original clubs were (in alphabetical order): Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Washington. In 1902, St. Louis replaced Milwaukee, and in 1903, the New York Highlanders (later to become the Yankees) took over the Baltimore franchise. The league then kept the same eight clubs for 51 years until Baltimore returned to the league replacing the St. Louis Browns in 1954.

After playing the first five games of the 1903 exhibition season at Atlanta (then in the Southern Association), the New York club visited New Orleans and played a five-game series against the old Pelicans. All five games were played at Athletic Park. The Highlanders won the series, three games to two.

The first game of the series, played on April 8, 1903, was of special historical interest. The New York club, in the days before opening its inaugural season in the American League, played before a crowd of 1,200 New Orleans fans three weeks before they ever played a game in New York. The Highlanders' home opening game was played three weeks later on April 30, 1903, a New York victory over Washington.

The exhibition game in New Orleans on April 8th was well played through 7 innings, with the score tied 2 – 2. A total of six errors by the Pels made things easy for the Highlanders, who coasted to an 8 – 2 victory. In the lineup for the New York club that day was Wee Willie Keeler, a future Hall of Famer who played 19 major league seasons and posted a .341 lifetime batting average. Listed at five feet four and one-half inches tall and one hundred forty pounds, Keeler summed up his success with the often repeated comment, "I hit 'em where they ain't."

Jack Chesboro and Clark Griffith, who each pitched for New York in the April 8th exhibition game, each became a Hall of Famer. Chesboro pitched 11 seasons and compiled a record of 198 – 132. Griffith won 237 games and lost 146 in a 20-year career.

Following the opening game the two teams split the remaining four games. The New York Highlanders left for Washington where they opened their first American League season against the Senators.

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At Athletic Park, New Orleans, April 8, 1903

NEW ORLEANS	AB	H	PO	A	NEW YORK	AB	H	PO	A
Roy Montgomery, lf	4	1	4	0	Lefty Davis, lf	4	1	3	0
Jake Atz, 2b	3	0	1	4	Willie Keeler, rf	5	2	0	0
James Smith, ss	4	1	1	2	Dave Fultz, cf	4	1	1	0
Jack Law, 1b	2	0	12	0	Jimmy Williams, 2b	5	1	4	2
Dan Sheehan, 3b	4	1	0	1	John Ganzel, 1b	3	0	8	1
Miller, rf	3	0	0	0	Wid Conroy, 3b	3	0	1	3
Ed Hutchcroft, cf	4	2	2	0	Herman Long, ss	4	1	3	1
Pat Hurley, c	4	0	3	1	Monte Beville, c	4	2	7	0
Charles Smith, p	2	1	0	2	Jack Chesboro, p	1	1	0	0
Harry Adams, p	1	0	1	2	Clark Griffith, p	2	0	0	3
Haslem, p	1	0	0	1					
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Totals	32	6	24	13	Totals	35	9	27	10

Runs – J. Smith, Hutchcroft, Davis, Keeler (2), Fultz, Williams, Conroy, Long, Beville. Errors – J. Smith, Atz, Law, Sheehan, Hurley, Haslem, Long. Sacrifice Hits – Atz, Law, Davis, Chesboro, Ganzel. Stolen Bases – Davis, Keeler, Conroy, Miller. Double Plays – Atz. To Law. Strikeouts – by Chesboro (4), Griffith, C. Smith, Adams. Bases on Balls – Off Chesboro (3), Griffith, Adams, Haslem. Hit by Pitch – by Chesboro (Miller).

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes
 Umpire – Phelan
 Attendance – 1,200

									R	H	E	
New Orleans	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	6
New York	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	x	8	9	1