

## **Hot Springs Arkansas: A Browns Spring Training Favorite**

**Browns camp was once host  
to as many as four clubs**

*From an article written by Dick Farrington in 1942*

The expected convergence of the Browns and Pirates from California on Hot Springs, Arkansas, as a training site, will find them treading ground where many of the great players of the past flashed their spikes. The Arkansas watering place at one time was the chief training center of the country for four major league clubs.

It was in 1886 that the spot was first visited by a squad of major leaguers. That was the year Pop Anson helped make baseball history by taking his famous old Chicago White stockings there. Anson's trip was one of the first, if not the first, on which a squad went south for practice.

However, there began a gradual trek away from Hot Springs in the early 1920s and not since 1923 has a major league squad practiced there as club owners preferred to go into the deeper south or to the coastal states of Florida and California.

The weather at Hot Springs was not always entirely favorable to conditioning muscles but the baths and mountain hiking were beneficial to the athletes. Many managers in more recent years have sent their battery men and older players to Hot Springs for preliminary drilling and boiling out prior to the work at the regular camps.

Thus, such famous players as Babe Ruth, Tris Speaker, Honus Wagner and scores of others were familiar figures at the Spa early each spring.

The Pirates made Hot Springs their base for many years, starting right after the turn-of-the-century, and the Browns, who were expected to team up with the Pirates next spring, did their exercises there back in 1911 when Bobby Wallace was manager. Starting with 1901 there was one run when the Pirates did not miss visiting Hot Springs for 15 seasons.

### **Spot entertained four clubs at once**

A checkup reveals that at times as many as four big-league teams practiced there. That happened in 1911 when the

Browns, Pirates, Dodgers and Reds were on hand. The following year the Red Sox, Dodgers, Phillies and Pirates shared the Spa.

Hot Springs was a favorite spot with the Red Sox from 1915 through 1923. They joined with the Pirates for training during most of those years and in 1917-18 the Bostonians had the Dodgers as their exhibition game sparring partners

Blake Harper, concessionaire at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis, who spent the winter in Hot Springs, acted as representative of the Browns in the negotiations there. Normally, that city would be capable of taking care of a couple of clubs in addition to St. Louis and Pittsburgh, but there had been a heavy demand on its hotels that winter. As for as park accommodations, the Spa is well set. The Ban Johnson Field, where the Hot Springs team of the Former Cotton States League played its games, is available for one of the squadrons and just adjacent to the Johnson field is another park.

### **California, we can't come**

The Browns had arranged to go to Anaheim, California, former base of the Philadelphia Athletics, but the Pacific coast state was dropped as a result of a travel saving request by the head of Defense Transportation. Last year the Browns drilled at DeLand, Florida and prior to that made their spring headquarters at San Antonio, Texas. During the latter years of the Phil Ball regime, West Palm Beach, Florida was the regular camp of the Brownies.

Incidentally, a deal was being cooked up between the Browns and Senators will probably bring pitcher Paul Dean to the St. Louis club in exchange for infielder Bob Dillinger and a sum of cash. Dillinger was with Toledo in 1942. [The Browns purchased Dean outright on February 1, 1943, so Farrington's scoop was partially true. But the Browns hung on to the future All-Star, Dillinger. Thank God! Since Dean only managed to pitch 13 innings for the Browns and was finished as a major leaguer by May of '43, the trade would have ranked up with the worst in Browns' history. -Ed.]

