greater parity before 1970 strains the issue. Although early river modification programs were unable to reverse a downward trend of river commerce, the nine-foot channel has opened the upper river to considerable barge traffic. It has also completed a major overhaul of the natural river. While obviously sympathetic to the river's environment, Afinson ends optimistically by pointing out that the most recent transformation has benefitted habitat and water quality as part of an ecologically sensitive river management program. Americans, he argues, are "unwilling to accept either the loss of the river's ecosystem or the loss of the river as a transportation artery" (p. 292). Fulfilling this dual expectation is the challenge faced by river managers.


**Baseball Fever**  
*Early Baseball in Michigan*  
By Peter Morris


What was there about baseball (given the number of urban eastern fads to fizzle in the Midwest), asks Peter Morris in his new study of baseball in Michigan, that allowed it to catch on west of the Appalachians, and how did it happen? Morris is interested in discerning how baseball evolved during a critical period in its history—the two decades preceding the founding of the National League in February 1876—by deeply examining one distinct area (in this case, the state of Michigan). Michigan is a good choice in many respects. The state was home to enough towns with sufficient populations, a large city (Detroit) that did not overpower the others, and enough fairs and other events to generate plenty of tournaments and spectators. This work demonstrates that baseball was becoming a "national sport" well before the advent of the first all-professional team in 1869.

Baseball reflected much about the tension between American ideals and reality, as Morris demonstrates. Seen as a country boys' game that was still played in idyllic settings of green grass and fresh air, the sport fit into the Jeffersonian ideal of an agricultural nation. However, it gained popular-
ity in the East and Detroit alike. Initially played by either elites or the upwardly mobile in cities under the most gentlemanly of rules, it quickly became a game in which youth, strength, and speed mattered far more than courtesy on the field; imagine, if you will, Roger Clemens apologizing for throwing a close pitch to Mike Piazza—as he might have in 1857, pitching for the Detroit Franklins. While initially a mere game played by clubs for fun and occasionally to determine who paid for dinner, baseball became a game where men pursued more tangible gains.

While focusing primarily on games and tournaments, Morris is clearly interested in figuring out why this elitist game, played by and for real or aspiring gentlemen, soon appealed to a broader base of spectators. For one thing, the old chivalry fell by the wayside within just a few years of the end of the Civil War, replaced by a greater emphasis on winning. Professionalization shifted the focus to finances, recruiting players, and gaining competitive edges. Soon the playing field was enclosed and spectators were charged for admission. Paradoxically, this trend helped baseball build a sense of community among spectators. Interestingly, local fans were even willing to tolerate imported professional players and ringers on their own teams so long as they won games and beat their rivals in neighboring towns, suggesting that rooting for the local team created a greater sense of community. Morris describes a process whereby baseball became a tool in building boosterism, community competitive spirit, and a sense of belonging, as playing and watching ball games spread from town to town and from fathers to sons.

This book uses pre-National League baseball as a prism through which to see the dovetailing of emerging Gilded Age values with changing views about leisure and play. This story would be lost had Morris tried to tackle it on a scale any larger than that of a state, because the nuances of local competition and of the ebb and flow of popularity would be buried under the story of emerging professional teams, as is the case with most histories of baseball during this period. The book might have been shortened by omitting the lists of players or by summarizing the results of yearly tournaments, but it would have lost its appeal as a closely detailed case study of the way in which baseball became the “national pastime.”

JEFFREY SMITH is professor of history at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. He has written extensively on the history of baseball, particularly on the relationship between progressive reform and the rise of industrial league teams. He lives in St. Louis, three miles from Busch Stadium.