

JAMES VINCENT JAMISON, JR. MR. BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE

By Mark C. Zeigler

Much more than a booster of baseball locally, J. V. Jamison, Jr., prominent Hagerstown industrialist and civic leader, was a moving spirit of professional baseball for most of the first half of the 20th century. His influence reached not only his hometown, and the state of Maryland, but throughout the country.

Born in Luray, Page County, Virginia on February 28, 1885, Jamison's family moved to Hagerstown when he was 12 years of age. Mr. Jamison's interest in sports in general traced back to his public school days, and at St. John's College in Annapolis, MD. A natural athlete, he became a three-letter man in college, taking as to tennis and football, as he did with his favorite sport, baseball. His classmates named him best athlete of St. John's graduating class of 1905.

While pursuing a career in manufacturing, he co-founded Jamison Cold Storage Door Company, Hagerstown, MD, with his father, in 1906, when they purchased the Jones Cold Storage Company. Jamison kept his interest in baseball by being elected President of the semi-pro Tri-City League in 1914. This proved to be a training ground, as Jamison was elected President of the Class D, Blue Ridge League in May of 1916, by the league directors, after original League President, Charles W. Boyer, abruptly resigned after a conflict of interest. Boyer also owned the Hagerstown club, and was responsible for the league umpires at the same time. After a challenging beginning, Jamison developed one of the finest Class D minor leagues in the nation, during his tenure throughout the remainder of the league's existence, which lasted through the 1930 season. The league was a proving ground for many major leaguers, including Baseball Hall of Famers "Lefty" Grove, "Hack" Wilson, and umpire Bill McGowan, plus noted players, Bill Sherdel, Jimmy Dykes, and umpire Eddie Rommel, to name a few.

His firm hand in dealing with controversy in the league, and handing out swift punishment to those who violated the rules gave Jamison a reputation that was admired by his fellow league presidents and followers throughout the sport.

Mr. Jamison served on a commission that elected Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis as the first commissioner of baseball in 1920, and held many offices in the National Association of Professional Baseball League. He served several terms on the Board of Arbitration, and the Junior World Series. At one time, he even was in charge of the inter-city series between the Chicago Cubs and Chicago White Sox.

Despite his contributions on a national level, Jamison always contributed generously of both time and energy to the promotion of baseball in Hagerstown and Washington County (MD). He was instrumental in planning and building Municipal Stadium in Hagerstown in 1930, and was a key figure in effecting the return of organized baseball to Hagerstown, by helping persuade Oren E. Sterling to move his Class B, Interstate League franchise from Sunbury, PA to Hagerstown in 1946. Five years later, Jamison was elected President of that league, which held a spectacular success during the post-war years.

Jamison married the former Anna Elder Alvey, who died in 1908. They had two children, John Vincent Jamison III, and Richard Alvey Jamison. He was founding member of the Hagerstown Rotary Club, and active in the American Red Cross, and the state's political arena, as a prominent Democrat.

Jamison died in Hagerstown, MD on August 28, 1954 at the age of 69 years.



J. V. JAMISON JR.

Sources: Hagerstown Morning Herald, article by Frank Colley, Hagerstown, MD, August 30, 1954; Obituary, Hagerstown Morning Herald. Photo from files of National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, 1927.

LEAGUE PRESIDENT
Class D, Blue Ridge League
1916-18, 1920-30