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Phillies History 1880-1980

Origins of Baseball

Forget what you know about Abner Doubleday. Our sport of baseball has a much more complex origin, one that is still being researched. It seems that a consensus agrees that baseball is a variation of the old British game of rounders which also begat Cricket. Some say that as early as the 1790's, the Eastern US was seeing a game that modern observers would consider as primative baseball.

Because of our British origins in Philadelphia, Cricket also was popular and it is said that by 1900, there were an equal number of cricket games going on in Fairmount park as baseball games. Not surprisingly, country clubs featuring cricket fields (which are composed of the cricket pitch, infield and outfield) are institutions in the Philadelphia area including the Germantown Cricket club which became famous, at least on this web site, for hosting Jackie's 7 squared birthday party in early 2011.

Historians indicate Northern forces playing baseball during the civil war. Possibly the only good things to come out of this civil war, besides the abolition of slavery, was the transcontinental railroad and the spread of baseball, both of which would be connected for the next 70 years.

Early baseball would have had problems with the normalization of equipment such as the ball and glove. Bats were traditionally made of ash as they are today, but the content standards of a baseball would not be set until the twentieth century and gloves have increased in durability (and catchability) with the maturation of the textile and leather industry.

The Worchester Ruby Legs

After the civil war, modern transportation depended on steam engines, barges and steam ships and horse drawn wagons. In this atmosphere, regional baseball leagues were established. Parks were built holding limited attendance (compared with today) for paid onlookers. One regional league centered around the Atlantic coast from New England south into the mid-atlantic states. One of the teams was the Worchester Rubylegs, Worchester being a small town near (now a suburb of) Boston.

The name would be typical for that period of history. Teams were nicknamed based on a type of clothes - Red Stockings, White Stockings, Redlegs - or local animals, birds or insects - again names like cubs, ponies, spiders. What was unique about the ruby legs was their futility during their existance, 1880 through 1882. In 1882 they lost 5 games of every 6 played and, needless to say, attendance suffered.

The Phila Quakers

Like many things in baseball, the details of what happened between the 1882 and 1883 are up for grabs. Major league baseball contends that the team moved en masse. Other sources, including Wikipedia, contend that another team took their place in the league. Whatever, in 1883 this league now had a team in Philadalphia, nicknamed the Philadelphia Quakers, and the Worchester Ruby Legs had been disbanded. That first season you wouldn't really have known the difference except for the location as the Philadelphia team continued the losing tradition of the year before, also losing 5 of every 6 games played.

Quakers is a natural nickname for Philadelphia. This author is already familiar with the NHL team of the same name that played for one season in Philadelphia in 1930, having relocated from Pittsburgh the year before. The internet cites a football team of the same name being in existance in the 1920's for one of the precursors to the NFL. There are probably other teams in other sports that have been nicknamed the Quakers including all the teams associated with the University of Pennsylvania. But we are concentrating on this baseball team because they would become known by the more familiar name within a few years.

In this manner, another professional team had come to Philadelphia. There already were teams playing professionally in the city and other regional leagues of baseball were in existance. One team in particular as it would evolve, known generally as the Athletics, would be the Quakers rivals for the loyalties of Philadelphians over the next 70 years even as the Quakers adopted the name Phillies for a nickname in 1890.

Philadelphians don't realize it, but this nickname is unique in all of professional sports. With a break of 2 years, the name and the city it represents would be the same for 119 years and counting (1890-1943, 1946-present) which far outdistances other team names within one location. It is believed that the Chicago Cubs is second in longevity having adopted the Cubs nickname in 1902. But, in addition, it meets the criteria of being named for an animal - a corruption of fillies - and is the nickname everyone in Philadelphia calls the city.

The Philadelphia Athletics

With the names set, the years leading to World War II would provide a rivalry between the Athletics and the Phillies for the hearts of baseball fans in Philadelphia. We know from hindsight the outcome of which team would prevail, but an observer during that time would probably have guessed wrong. The Athletics would soon have an owner/manager, Cornelius McGillicuddy, who would take the A's, as they were called, to the heights and depths of Baseball history. Known as Connie Mack, he coached in a business suit and was ruthless as a general manager and minority owner because of constant financial problems.

In 1900, the American League was formed. The Athletics were the Philadelphia representative in that league. Mack, and a Philadelphia businessman, Ben Shibe, teamed up to provide the management for this team. Shibe would lend his name to the stadium that the team would play in. Shibe had been a part owner of the Phillies and was forced to divest himself of this. The Phillies were already part of another league that had been around for a while - the National League. Both leagues were independent and the definition of what a strike zone was between the two leagues would not be resolved for another 80 years. In 1903, both leagues decided to cohost a season ending series to answer fan's questions of which was the better league. We know this as the World Series and except for 1904, and again in 1994, this has become well known as the annual fall classic. With the signing of an agreement in 1903, the two leagues recognized the existance of each other and this remains in effect to this day.

Baseball and Railroads

We should also at this point indicate that baseball at that time followed train tracks. The trackage of the Pennsylvania Railroad based in Philadelphia and the New York Central, based in New York defined the extents of both leagues. The Boston to Washington corridor of the two train systems sustained 2 teams in Boston (the Red Sox in the AL and the Braves (now in Atlanta) in the NL), 3 teams in NY (The Highlanders (now Yankees) in the AL, the trolleydodgers (known as the dodgers) in the NL and the Giants in the NL with the Dodgers moving to LA and the Giants to San Francisco in 1958), two teams in Philadelphia (the Athletics (now based in Oakland) in the AL and the Phillies in the NL) and a team in Washington (the Senators (now the Minn Twins) in the AL ). Trackage to Chicago supported a team in Pittsburgh (the pirates in the NL), a team in Cleveland (the spiders, now the indians, in the AL) and a team in Cincinatti (the redlegs, now the reds, in the NL). The trackage terminal in Chicago supported 2 teams (the Cubs in the NL and the White Sox in the Al) and leading from Chicago south, trackage supported 2 teams in St Louis (the Cardinals in the NL and the Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles) in the AL ) and finally leading from Chicago north a team was supported in Detroit (the tigers in the AL). You can see that five cities had 2 or more teams with 5 other cities supporting one team. Both the NL and AL at that time are circuits based on the railroad system of the nation at that time and is not a national sport by any means being situated in the Midwest, New England and the Mid-Atlantic. One should note that minor leagues abounded throughout the country.

In Philadelphia, of the two teams, the A's and the Phillies, the A's would see the bulk of success in the years up to World War II. Connie Mack managed the team throughout the period and secured 9 American League titles and 5 world championships, Two times, 1910-1911 and 1929-1930, the team repeated as World champions. This success probably made it difficult for the Phillies as they competed in the same market. But, there was one period of success for the Phillies prior to World War II.

The Grover Cleveland Era

An extraordinary pitcher, Grover Cleveland Alexander, joined the Phillies staff in 1911. His rookie season he won 28 games. He was a strikeout and complete game machine while in his twenties and probably is the reason why starting pitchers are not allowed to over pitch (as he did in the early part of his career) for he lost much of his effectiveness as he reached his thirties. However, in 1915, riding his arm as he would have won at least 30 games that season, the Phillies won the National League pennant. At that time this meant having the best record of the 8 teams in the National League. Unfortunately they were swept by the Boston Red Sox in the World Series of that year.

The 1915 World Series is especially interesting to baseball historians. In 1914, Babe Ruth had been purchased by the Boston Red Sox and shipped to the minor leagues. 1915 was his first real season in the majors. At the time he was considered a pitcher with the additional capability of hitting when in the lineup. He went 18-8 that season and while he did not pitch against the Phillies in the series, this was the first of many World series that he would be a participant.

While the A's ebbed and flowed until World War II with periods of greatness and periods of poorness, except for 1915, it was basically downhill for the Phillies. Between 1919 and 1941, the Phils were in the cellar for many seasons. In this period they were 4th one year, one year 5th, twice 6th, 6 times 7th and the remaining years, 13 in all, ending up dead last. Not an enviable record by any means.

Stadium

Locally, this is all taking place in the area of Broad and Lehigh. At the time this is like South Philadelphia today, an area where stadiums were built. Within the city, basically you have farms and fields above Girard avenue. The interurbans that linked the city to the northern suburbs would extend down Old York road on occasion to service the stadium(s) on Lehigh Avenue. The street itself had a trolley car line designated as Rt 54. In the late 20's, the Broad Street Subway would be built and one of the stops was North Philadelphia Station which provided some access to Lehigh Avenue and the Broad Street Station of the Pennsylvania railroad which was in the vicinity.

The Phils played in Philadelphia Park situated at Broad and Lehigh. A series of mishaps hexed the stadium including at least one fire that almost leveled the park and several instances of stands collapsing which made attendance at a Phillies game a risky proposition on occasion. The most interesting tales of this era of the team involve the General Manager and apparently part-time owner, William Baker, who renamed the stadium after himself. So, in later years, until it was abandoned, it was known as the Baker Bowl.

The A's would build a stadium just west of the Phillies Stadium on Lehigh Ave, named Shibe park, after Ben Shibe, the owner mentioned above. Shibe Park, renamed Connie Mack Stadium, would be the Athletics home until they moved to Kansas City in 1954 and the Phillies home, after the Baker Bowl was abandoned as being too dangerous to sit in, until 1971 when the Phils moved to Veterans Stadium in South Philadelphia.

The Pre WWII years for the Phillies

The aforementioned William Baker would become a first of many poor general managers and owners. It was downhill for the team during the 20's through 40's until a ray of light was seen in the 1949 season. One of the big lowlights is that the Phillies were the victim of the first unassisted truple play in baseball history in 1923. Other lowlights would follow although some players did distinguish themselves from time to time including Chuck Klein and Lefty O'Doul who are famed for their baseball exploits by baseball historians.

But, baseball at that time, as it is today, was very dependent on evaluators of talent and the ability to have the financial clout to secure the talent. The draft as we know it today did not exist and teams were allowed to sign rookie talent as they liked and could create bidding wars to do this. The Yankees were a team that always had the financial and baseball acumen to sign and develop young talent. Not so with the Phillies especially in developing young and talented pitchers. In many years the Phils batting and slugging average would be among the leaders in the National League while their record was at the bottom due to a lack of pitching although it did make for high scoring games at the park.

It is said that however bad William Baker was as a general manager, his replacement, Gerry Nugent, was worse. One of the odd firsts that the Phillies can claim is the hiring of Nugent's wife as Vice President in the late 30's, a time that women had no role in baseball, giving you an example of the problems of management in those days.

If you read between the lines, the Phillies ownership also had many problems and apparently was investigated and jailed from time to time on various charges. Who knows the real story of this but the late 20's, early 30's was a time of prohibition amd there were many different businessmen who tried to skirt this law.

Add some info about media in the 1930’s.

You can see this document on the web

The beginning of the Whiz Kids

World War II was a difficult time for all of baseball. No deferments were allowed for players and many players found themselves transported into active war theaters. Ted Williams, for instance, was in the military during the 1943 through 45 seasons and again in the Military for Korea during the early 1950's. The Phils were no exception to this except that sometime during the war, a new set of owners controlled the team. These owners wanted to rename the team to the Blue Jays, which they did except for the absence of a uniform. The paperwork might say Blue Jays, but the uniforms still said Phillies and the Blue Jays name was dropped when this new ownership was caught betting on games and subsequently forced to sell out to a new set of owners, the Carpenters.

The Dupont family is very established in the Philadelphia/Wilmington area by way of their Chemical enterprises. One branch, as this author understands, is the Carpenter family and the Carpenter/Dupont money amd prestige was infused into the team somewhere near the end (or at the end) of World War II.

With this new funding, there was a strengthening of the farm teams in the next few years. By this time the Phils are sharing space with the Athletics at Shibe Park, soon to be renamed Connie Mack Stadium. They would not be sharing these facilities for long. By 1954 the Athletics would be moving to Kansas City and in 1968 continued their trek west to Oakland where they are stationed now. The Phils emergence as a competitive team may have had an indirect bearing on this move.

The group of young players signed post war by the team and positioned in minor league ball would become the whiz kids and even today that name evokes fond memories for many people. Names like Richie Ashburn, Robin Roberts, Curt Simmons, Del Ennis would become Philadelphia area household names duing the late 40's and the 50's.

Many of these players were called up in 1949 and in 1950, lightning struck. Not picked to really do well, the team fought the Brooklyn Dodgers down to the wire for the pennant. This was a Brooklyn team at the top of their form with the likes of Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese, Roy Campanella and Gil Hodges. While the Dodgers would dominate the national league in the early 50's, they would not prevail in 1950 itself. Both teams were tied for first as they played each other on the last game of the season in Brooklyn. A year later, it would be deja vu for the Dodgers as they would lose an end of season playoff game to the Giants in the famous game known as "the shot heard round the world." That year they would lose to the Giants on Bobby Thompson's home run.

The Phils/Dodgers 1950 ending season game is not as famous nationally as "the shot heard round the world" but it was a tie game in the bottom of the nineth. The tie was preserved with Richie Ashburn, the center fielder for the Phillies, throwing out a runner atempting to score the winning run at home in that inning. The Phils would beat the Dodgers in overtime to win the National League pennant that year, 1950. Unfortunately, they were about to meet the greatest team of the 1950's in the World Series, the New York Yankees. The Yankees would win 6 World series during this decade including their encounter with the Phillies whom they swept in 1950.

Back to the Doldrums

1952 would start another march into the wilderness for the next 24 or so years. It generally was an era of losing seasons for the team. One lowlight is the 23 game losing streak in 1961, still a major league record. Three years later in 1964, it looked like the gods of baseball were again smiling on the team. For one thing, Richie Ashburn had rejoined the team as a play by play commentator and he was always fun to listen to. And, in addition, for the most part, they were leading the National League throughout much of the season riding the play of players like Johnny Callison, Richie Allen, Cookie Rojas, Bobby Wine and Jim Bunning. Bunning, who later would be a US senator from Kentucky, would pitch a perfect game against the Mets on Father's day and a few weeks later, Callison would hit the first walk off home run in the All Star Game's history. With about 10 games left, the Phils looked like thay had an insurmountable 8 game lead. The the Gods stopped smiling and the Phils went into an 8 game losing streak, losing by the oddest ways to boot, including the Cincinatti Reds pulling off a 9th inning steal of home to win one of the games. It would be the St Louis Cardinals who would represent the National League in the 1964 Word Series.

Sometimes its tough to measure the impact of a sports team on a city. We know that certain teams such as the Packers of Green Bay and the Canadiens of Montreal represent more than sports to their fans. The Phillies to some degree were in a similar position. Several years previous the Philadelphia Warriors, considered with the Knicks and Celtics, as the elite team in the NBA and tracing their roots back to the Philadelphia SPHAs (one of the truely legendary teams in pre NBA basketball) had left the city to move to San Francisco. In addition, there was ownership problems with the NFL Eagles beginning that year. Both the Eagles' problems and the Warrior's departure was a shot at the city's civic pride and the '64 Phils improbable pursuit of the pennant perked up the entire city, not just baseball fans. The collapse was felt throughout the entire region.

The 1970-1980 Era

It would be another 10 years in the wilderness for the Phillies although several big events were to occur. It was more than obvious that Connie Mack stadium had seen better days and the city of Philadelphia in accordance with the Eagles and Phillies created one of the first multi purpose stadiums in the country, Veterans stadium. Situated in South Phildelphia and using artificial turf as its base, the Vet, as the new facility would be nicknamed, hosted all sorts of sporting and cultural events including many Army-Navy football games. This area of South Philadelphia also hosted the Spectrum, used for indoor events and the Spectrum's replacement, now known as the Well Fargo Center. However, just like Connie Mack Stadium, the Vet would someday have to be replaced and that would be some 33 years in the future, in 2004. Both the Eagles, in 2003 and the Phillies, in 2004 would build their own stadiums and the Vet, on live TV across the Philadelphia area, would be imploded in 2004 before the Phils played their first game that year in the new Citizen's Bank park.

Other things were going on in 1971 coincident with the Vet as the new stadium. The team hired one of the Houston Astros junior broadcasters, Harry Kalas, as Richie Ashburn's partner in the broadcast booth. Their chemistry, both in the booth and in real life where they became best of friends, was to be the stuff of legend until Ashburn died suddenly in 1997. While it certainly didn't sound the same, Kalas would continue broadcasting Phillies games until he died in 2009. For many years this duo would be a threesome with the addition of Andy Musser into the booth. Musser, whose cousin, Pete, would found and control Safeguard Scientifics, was a well known sports announcer locally and nationally.

The early 70's also saw the final completion of the Broad Street subway line. Naturally, it should have run from Olney to Oregon on Broad Street which is reputed to be the longest straight street in North America. In 1928 through 32, initial construction had the line running from Olney through Walnut Locust. Construction was interrupted by the depression and it would not be until 1938 that the line would be extended down to Snyder Ave. in South Philadelphia. Already mentioned was North Philadelphia station which handled the traffic to both Connie Mack Stadium and the North Philadelphia station of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1955 or so, the line was extended north off of Broad Street to the Fern Rock station (11th & Champlost) where a car maintenance facility was built. To service the Vet, at the base of Broad Street in South Philadelphia, two new stations were added going south, Oregon (which was where it should have ended in the first place) and then south to Paterson, where the stadium was. The Paterson station is reputed to be the biggest Subway station is the world, but who knows for sure. It provides for 2 layered usage and each layer can handle 4 fully equipped subway trains, therefore allowing for 8 in all. It became fully operational sometime after the Vet was placed in service and Septa began the practice, still done today, of running special Subway trains from Fern Rock to the Vet on game days.

Also somewhat coincident with these developments was the radio and TV package that the Phillies renegotiated in the early to middle '70s. The club had had a long standing relationship with WFIL radio and TV, both owned by Triangle Publications, which owned multiple media outlets and was solely owned by Walter Annenberg who became a billionaire and statesmen but whose origins were somewhat less lofty. Triangle, and therefore Annenberg, also owned the Philadlephia Inquirer and other media assets including TV Guide. But, the media outlets, along with the Philadelphia Inquirer, were sold to various parties in the late 60's through 70's and the Phils decided to look at other options. In terms of TV, this was the highpoint of the UHF explosion and one of the new UHF channels, Channel 17, won the bid to broadcast the games on TV. The radio rights, however, took a very odd turn.

A Philadelphia radio station, KYW, starts out as a radio station in Chicago, moving to Philadelphia with its call letters. In the early 50's or so, stations are swapped between The Westinghouse radio group and NBC and two cities, Cleveland and Philadelphia. In Phila, KYW assumes the call letters, WRCV, while the call letters KYW are assumed by the previous NBC stations in Cleveland. In 1962, the FCC rules that this transfer was illegal and orders a reversion of the transfer. Out goes WRCV and in comes KYW (and for you media fans, the stations in Cleveland become WKYC). In 1963, KYW becomes one the the first stations (although it is not the first) to go all news. Because of its news, weather and, later, traffic reporting, it quickly becomes the leading morning commuter station in Philadelphia as far as audience is concerned although its signal is very weak. What's this have to do with baseball, you might ask? Surprisingly, KYW wins a 5 year contract in 1976 to broadcast the Phillies games and goes wholeheartedly into doing this. It changes its theme and jingle to "Catch the Spirit, Catch it on KYW" which any Philadelphian of a certain age will gladly sing for you. This is in accordance with the celebration of the Bi-Centenial in 1976 and the Phillies game bradcasts from 1976 through 1981. It teams with Septa to publicize the special trains Septa is running to the Vet as indicated above and puts its reporters on the trains for live broadcasts. The Jingle is very apt as we continue with a discussion of the Phillies through the 1970's into 1980.

So, we return to 1971. In addition to the creation of a new structure, the Vet, for them to play in that year, the Phillies were also instrumental, although reluctantly, in the overturning of another structure in Baseball. Early in the last century Major League Baseball was taken to court over its near monopoly over the sport and was given an exemption by several courts including a final case ruled in Major league baseball's favor by the United States Supreme Court. This ruling allowed clubs to control a player once he was signed. Either he played for that team, or the team he was traded to, or he didn't play. The player was not a free agent. In the off season of 1969, The Phillies traded for Curt Flood, at the time a star of the St Louis Cardinals. Flood would not play for the Phillies and sued major league baseball. His case led to the modern era of free agency where players, like any other workers although paid better, control who they will play for.

Going way Down and then Heading Up, the coming of Steve Carlton

We should also note that Tim McCarver was a part of this deal and, unlike Flood, he did report to the Phillies. Now best known for his analysis on Fox's Weekly Baseball casts, McCarver would play for the Phillies twice, 1970 through 1972 amd 1975 through 1979 when he became, in essence, the personal catcher to Steve Carlton - and how Steve Carlton became a Phillie is described below. One more thing about McCarver. Baseball is a sport of records and McCarver is one of 29 or so baseball players to have done the following: With a one day contract to sit with the Phillies in Sept.' 80 and having been called up by the Cardinals in Sept' 59, McCarver has played in 4 decades '50s,'60s,'70s and '80s.

By the time of the opening of the Vet, 15 of the original 16 teams that were in existance at the time of the first World Series had a series win, although perhaps in a relocated city. The only franchise missing from the winning list was the team with this new stadium. But things were about to change and for the better. In the early 70's emphasis was put on developing new talent and the Phillie's farm system became one of the best in Baseball. This was possible because Major League baseball was the last of the major sports to install a draft to acquire new talent. This acquiring of new talent had been the forte of the Yankees for many years and now that was broken. The influx of talent into all the teams would create a more even playing field and the Phils would be no exception. The hoarding of talent was also restricted as teams could raid other farm systems for players who were being kept in the minors too long. Even the number of times a player could move back and forth between the minors and majors was constrained. These new rules and regulations on young talent allowed the "also-ran" teams of both leagues to attain parity.

But, it was an old fashioned salary dispute that would allow the Phillies to grasp the brass ring for the first time. And, interestingly enough, it involved the Cardinals, the same team whose trade of Curt Flood went so bad a few years before. The Cardinals had a young pitcher named Steve Carlton on staff. During the late 1960's, the Cards had the best pitching staff in either league. Carlton, when contract negotialtions arose, would continually make excessive demands at least as far as Cardinal management was concerned. So, before the 72 season, the Cardinals decided to trade Carlton to the Phillies for Rick Wise, also a young pitcher.

In retrospect, this is a no brainer of a deal as far as the Phillies were concerned but it was very difficult at the time. Wise was a team favorite and in the 1971 season had pitched a game where he himself had hit two grand slams. We think he also had a no hitter to his credit. Looking at records, there wasn't much of a difference in the number of wins in their careers at that time between the two. However, the next season, would show this trade to be the greatest in Phillies history. With a very losing club, Carlton managed to win 27 games in 1972. Since the Phils only won 59 games for the year, Carlton basically won half the team's games. The pitching, and even more importantly the leader of that phase of the game, was in place for the Phillies.

Another change not recognized at the time was movement in the front office. A second generation of Carpenters were taking the helm. One, in particular, Ruly Carpenter, moved up into the position of team president. Having grown up in the family of Phillies ownership, it was his desire to get the team to the top finally. One change that mattered was evident. The Curt Flood case had shown that at the time of that trade the average baseball player did not want to play in Philadelphia. Ruly's policies changed that opinion. By the end of the decade, Philadelphia was considered to be a player friendly environment.

To the top of the baseball world

Now, the emphasis on the farm team made its impact. At third base, a converted shortstop, now held sway. He didn't do well his first year, 1973, when he batted only 196. But, Mike Schmidt would more than make up for this becoming what most consider the greatest third baseman in the history of the game. He was joined on that side by a feisty fellow, Larry Bowa, who played shortstop. By 1976, the Phils were a powerhouse and won the national League eastern division that year. They would threepeat in 1977 and 1978. Unfortunately, this does not translate to a World Series appearance. Each year they are beaten by the Western Conference winner, generally the Los Angeles Dodgers. These losses were bitter for the entire city and the team but especially for the Phil's manager, Danny Ozark, who had come from the Dodgers system to lead this team. In both 1976 and 1977, the team had 101 wins which is a team record for wins in one season.

Things go downhill in 1979 as injuries overcome talent. Danny Ozark was replaced midseason by Dallas Green. Green was the director of player personnel for the Phillies, meaning he oversaw the farm system. He had been a pitcher for the Phillies and had been on both the team that lost 23 games in a row in 1961 and the 1964 team that had almost made it to the series. A very gruff, old fashioned type of player, he was very different than the man he replaced, Danny Ozark, in his approach to his players. He was not reticent to blast players in the media and in some cases this caused some hard feelings with his players although other players appreciated his honesty.

Green was manager of the Phillies through the 1981 season when he became manager/general manager of the Cubs for several years. Returning to the Phillies organization in the 1990's, he continues today to be a part of the Phillies front office. He has not shied away from controversary. His negative comments about Scott Rolen in the late 1990's probably was a cause of Rolen's demand to be traded. Recently, and unfortunately, Green was again in the news as it was his granddaughter who was killed in the Phoenix shooting that injured congresswomen Gabby Gilfords.

Another change occurred in 1979 which would bring results in the next few years. Pete Rose, of Cincinatti Reds fame, was signed as a free agent in 1979. His addition would pay dividends the next year but were not that evident in '79. But it was clear that Rose was a team leader and this seemed to be something the Phillies would need the next time they were in a post season playoff series.

The City finally has a winner

In 1980, everything clicked and the Phillies won the National League eastern division with a 91-71 record. The Houston Astros won the western division and the two teams squared off in a 5 game series to determine the National League's representative to the World Series. This created one of the great series in Major League history and sometimes you can see some of these games replayed on ESPN. Every game was a kind of cliffhanger and the teams were tied as the 5th and final game was played in Houston. The Astros took at 5-2 lead by the top of the 8th, but the Phillies had all year battled back from large deficits and this was to be no exception. In scoring 5 runs in the 8th inning, the Phillies eventually won the game and the series in the 10th by an 8 to 7 score. The Phils were the National League winners for the third time in their history. And like 1915 and 1950, it was World series, here we come! But could the Phillies break the hex of being the only founding team of Major League baseball not to have won the fall classic?

The World Series that year would pit the Phillies against the Kansas City Royals who were appearing at a world series for the first time. The Royals were an expansion team that reestablished a Kansas City team after the Kansas City A's (nee the Philadelphia A's) had left for Oakland. It was kind of ironic to be playing a team based in the city that had become the new home of the Philadelphia A's in 1954. Another irony was that the star of the Royals, George Brett, was the brother of a favorite Phillie pitcher, Ken Brett, in the early 70's although Ken did play for many teams. Among Ken's "achievements" was ceding Hank Aaron's 700th home run and hitting homers in 4 consecutive games as a pitcher, both of these things done while a Phillie in the early 70's.

By game six, held in the Vet, the Phils had established a 3 wins to 2 wins lead in the series. Steve Carlton was pitching and the only way to describe it, for those who were not there to see it in person or on TV, is to say that the atmosphere in the city was electric. Everything revolved around the game and there were few residents in the area not tuned in to see game 6. You surely remember this game if you were watching. On one foul pop up close to the Phillies dugout, Pete Rose grabbed the ball as it spurted out of catcher Bob Boone's glove to record an out in one of the late innings. You may also remember Tug McGraw, pitching in relief for Carlton, fluttering his fingers on his chest just before striking out the last out. You surely would remember McGraw's leap off the mound, which perhaps if ever measured would be a world record, as the strikeout was recorded and the players tumbling over each other as they rushed to join the celebration on the field. Even the city got into the act by pre-positioning the Philadelphia Police mounted horse patrol between the fans and the field to prevent the fans from tearing up the stadium. The long wait had ended. For the first time ever, the Phillies could claim themselves the champions of the baseball world. Perhaps this was not "the shot heard round the world" but it certainly was heard throughout the Philadelphia area. What a glorious day that was!

A few days later the city and team staged a party through the streets of center city. Classes were effectively cancelled as no one showed up at schools. Businesses allowed their employees to leave and join the celebration. It was like VE and VJ day in the city that day as emotions hit a fevered pitch. No one knew it then, but it would be another 28 years, in a drenching downpour in Tampa, before this would be repeated.