

Going to bat for Newark's Hall of Famer

A headstone in a cemetery is the only local remembrance of baseball legend Vic Willis. Some people in Newark want to change that.

By **STEPHEN CHRZANOWSKI**
Staff reporter

NEWARK — The only monument to Vic Willis in his hometown sits in St. John's Cemetery on Elkton Road and West Park Place.

His grave, with its modest granite headstone, lies so close to the cemetery driveway that visitors drive over it. And to some people, that seems an undignified end for a man who might very well have his picture on a Wheaties box were he still playing baseball today.

Willis, a former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher, is one of only three Delawareans to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. And some residents in his hometown would like to see more done to draw attention to the life of the turn-of-the-century player.

"I've been a baseball fan since I was a kid, and some of these old names mean something to me," said State Sen. Steven H. Amick, R-Newark West.

Amick recently asked City Council to consider a partnership with the county and state to create a monument to Willis.

Despite his place in the Hall of Fame, the name Vic Willis is an obscure one, even to fans such as Amick who know baseball history. He said it's equally obscure to most Newarkers, who were born long after Willis retired in 1910. But preserving such local history is all the more reason why Willis should be remembered, Amick said.

Some of Willis' descendants agree.

"It's been a long time coming," said Willis' granddaughter, Marian Hunt, 77, of Wilmington.

At 6-foot-2 and about 200 pounds, Willis won 248 games for National League teams in Boston, Pittsburgh and St. Louis from 1898 to 1910. But Hunt remembers Willis as the quiet, loving man who would save his rationed gasoline during World War II so he could have enough to



The News Journal/FRED COMEGYS

LeRoy Hill once learned baseball from Vic Willis. Now, the former major-league scout is among those who would like to see Newark honor one of only three Delawareans in baseball's Hall of Fame.

drive to Hunt's home in Elkton, Md., where he could hold his great-grandchildren.

Willis was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1995, joining fellow Delawareans umpire Bill McGowan and Negro League player Judy Johnson. Hunt said Willis, known for his wicked curveball, enjoyed throwing a baseball around with the neighborhood children.

One of those youngsters, 79-year-old LeRoy C. Hill Jr., learned enough from Willis to sign as a pitcher with the St. Louis Cardinals. But before ever getting into a game, he dropped out of baseball to become a World War II fighter pilot. He later became a scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies.

Hill said Willis' statistics — which include winning 20 or more games in eight seasons, and 50 career shutouts — show that he could probably hurl in the majors today.

"The only thing that's different [in baseball today] is the gloves are a hell of a lot bigger," Hill said.

Willis spent his post-baseball



Vic Willis was a star pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1900s.

days in Newark's Washington House, a hotel he operated and where he lived with his wife, Mary Jane, until he died in 1947 at age 71. Known today as the Stone Balloon nightclub, Willis' establishment boasted steam heat, electric light and "first-class accommodations to the traveling public" as well as a taproom.

"He was sort of the Sam Malone of Newark," great-grandson Thomas Hunt joked, referring to the retired baseball player who ran the bar in the TV show, "Cheers."

Amick would like to see the monument go in the square next to the Stone Balloon, in front of the Newark Academy. He said the cost could range from \$1,500 for a simple plaque, to \$80,000 for a life-sized sculpture. He figures that if anything is done, it will be on the low end.

Family and friends said Willis would be a far cry from some of today's flamboyant players. Quiet and unassuming, the only thing they remember riling him was the occasional good-natured goading he'd get from friends about the time that baseball legend Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers stole home while Willis was on the mound during the 1909 World Series.

"That was the ultimate disgrace as far as he was concerned," Hill said. "He always blamed it on the catcher."

Pittsburgh still won the World Series.

BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

Delawarean Willis finally gets his due

Pitcher gains posthumous induction

By **PAULA PARRISH**

Staff reporter

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Almost half a century after his death and 85 years after his last outing as a major-league pitcher, Vic Willis finally received the recognition his family has for years thought he deserved.

Willis, from Newark, was one of five men inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame Sunday afternoon and one of three given the award posthumously.

With a career that was winding down when the Model T was enjoying its first popularity, Willis' 13-year career wrapped around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

"You can't be emotional about someone who died six months before you were born," said Tom Hunt Jr., Willis' great-grandson. "[But] this is something we've been waiting for for a long time."

Hunt was selected out of several family members attending the ceremony to give the acceptance speech on behalf of Willis, who completed 388 of the 471 games he started and won 20 or more games in a season eight times.

"I got over my nervousness to give a speech," said Hunt, whose mention of Willis' hometown brought cheers. "I'm not used to looking at that many people when I'm talking."

Ben Decker, Willis' grandson, also joined Hunt on the stage as his relative became the second player and third Delawarean honored by a plaque in baseball's most sacred place. Negro League star Judy Johnson and umpire

Bill McGowan were selected ahead of him.

"[His career] ended long before the Hall of Fame was established [in 1939] and it's unlikely that anyone here today ever saw Vic Willis throw a single professional pitch," Hunt said during his speech. "Vic Willis was a tall, right-handed pitcher with a superb curveball. He referred to it as his Grapevine Sinker. Contemporary accounts indicate he also threw a very effective drop pitch and could deliver slow or fast pitches with the same motion."

Willis won 248 games for National League teams in Boston, Pittsburgh and St. Louis from 1898-1910 and was selected to the Hall of Fame in 1986 by the Veterans Committee. However, committee members decided that year to select only two and Bobby Doerr and Ernie Lombardi had more votes.

Richie Ashburn, who ironically was nominated to the Hall by the same Veterans Committee as Willis, was one of the several people Hunt thanked during his speech.

"This year marks the 100th anniversary of Vic Willis' entry into professional baseball," Hunt said. "Over the years, many people have been supportive of Vic Willis' candidacy for the Hall of Fame. We are very grateful to all of them. Coincidentally, one of those who, as a sports writer, wrote in support of Vic Willis' admission to the Hall of Fame was Richie Ashburn. Richie Ashburn, we thank you for that support. It's a special honor to see Vic Willis admitted to the Hall in the same year with you."

State of California } ss. Be It Remembered, that on
Los Angeles County } this 21st day of January in
the year of our Lord one thousand
A. S. Mead } and nine hundred and eleven,
Notary Public } personally came before me A. S.
Los Angeles Co. Cal. } Mead a Notary Public for the
State of California Edward A. -

Humphrey and J. Pearl Humphrey, his wife, parties to this Indenture known to me personally to be such, and severally acknowledged this Indenture to be their deed, and the said J. Pearl Humphrey being at the same time privately examined by me apart from her husband acknowledged that she executed the said Indenture willingly without compulsion or threats or fear of her husband's displeasure. Given under my Hand and Seal of office the day and year aforesaid,

A. S. Mead,
Notary Public.

In and for the County of Los Angeles and State of California
Received for Record April 3rd A. D. 1911,
A. B. L. George,
Recorder.

This Indenture, made the Fourth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eleven. . . . Between, George H. Johnson of the Town of Newark New Castle County and State of Delaware and Mary A. Johnson his wife, parties of the first part, and Victor S. Willis of the Town, County and State aforesaid, party of the second part. Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of Forty six thousand Dollars current lawful money of the United States of America unto them well and truly paid by the said party of the second part, at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted, bargained, sold, aliened, conveyed, released, conveyed and confirmed and by these presents do grant bargain, sell, alien, convey, release, confirm and confirm unto the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns. All those certain tracts, pieces or parcels of land, with the hold known as the Washington House, and other buildings thereon erected, situate on the South side of Main Street and the North side of Delaware Avenue

in the Town of Newark, New Castle County and State of Delaware, more particularly bounded and described as follows, to wit: -

- v. No. 1. Beginning at an iron pin in the South side of Main Street, a corner for other lands of the said James A. Wilson, said iron pin being situate East of and two hundred and twenty and six-tenths feet distant from the center of Academy Street; Thence by said Wilson's other lands South one degree East three hundred and twenty-five feet and six-tenths feet to an iron pin; Thence by lands recently purchased from the Trustees of the Academy of Newark, South eighty-nine degrees West One hundred and fifty-four and nine-tenths feet to an iron pin in line of lands of the said Trustees of the Academy of Newark; Thence by said last mentioned lands, North ten degrees East, three hundred and twenty-nine and eight-tenths feet to another iron pin in the South side of Main Street aforesaid; Thence thereby North eighty-nine degrees East One hundred and one and eight-tenths feet to the place of Beginning. Containing three rods and thirty-three square perches of land more or less.
- v. No. 2. Beginning at an iron pipe in the center of Delaware Avenue, said iron pipe being a corner for this said land or lands now or late of James A. Wilson; - Thence by and with the center of Delaware Avenue North eighty-nine and three-quarters degrees West One hundred and twenty-six feet and four-tenths of a foot to another iron pipe, a corner for lands now or late of the Trustees of the Academy of Newark; Thence by and with the said lands now or late of the Trustees of the Academy of Newark, North six and three-quarter degrees East One hundred and thirty-nine feet and two-tenths of a foot to an iron pipe, a corner for other lands of George H. Johnson, herein described as No. 1.; Thence thereby North eighty-eight and one-quarter degrees East One hundred and fifty-four feet and two-tenths of a foot to an iron pipe, a corner for said land now or late of James A. Wilson; Thence thereby South one-half of a degree East One hundred and thirty-six feet and one-tenth of a foot to the first mentioned iron pipe and place of Beginning. Containing within said lands

Two rods and three and thirty-six hundredths square perches of land, be the same more or less. Being the same land and premises which Jas. G. M^r Laughlin and Margaret G. M^r Laughlin by Indenture bearing date the nineteenth day of February A. D. 1967, and recorded in the office for the recording of deeds to, in and for New Castle County and State of Delaware, at Wilmington, in Deed Record B, Vol. 21, Page 298, &c., to the said George H. Johnson did convey and assure as by reference will appear. Together with all and singular the buildings, improvements, ways, woods, waters, water-courses, rights, liberties, privileges, hereditaments and appurtenances whatsoever thereto belonging, or in anywise appertaining and the revenues and remainders, rents, issues and profits thereof, and all the estate, right, title, interest, property, claim and demand whatsoever of them, be said parties of the first part, in law, equity or otherwise whatsoever of in and to the same, and every part and parcel thereof. To Have and to Hold. The said lots, pieces or parcels of land with the buildings, hereditaments and premises hereby granted, or mentioned, or intended so to be, with the appurtenances, unto the said party of the second part, his Heirs and assigns, to and for the only proper use and behoof of the said party of the second part, his Heirs and assigns forever. And the said parties of the first part, for themselves, their Heirs, Executors and Administrators do by these presents, covenant, grant and agree to and with the said party of the second part, his Heirs and assigns, that they the said parties of the first part, their Heirs and assigns have the hereditaments and premises herein above described and granted, or mentioned, or intended so to be, with the appurtenances unto the said party of the second part, his Heirs and assigns, against them the said parties of first part, their Heirs and assigns and against all and every other Person or Persons whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof, by, through, from or under him, her, them or any of them, shall and will by these presents warrant and forever defend. In Witness Whereof, the said parties of the first part have hereunto set their Hands and Seals. Dated the day and year first above written.

Sealed and delivered } Geo. H. Johnson, [Seal]
in the presence of }
Clifford V. Manning } Mary A. Johnson, [Seal]

State of Delaware } ss.
New Castle County }
Clifford V. Manning }
Notary Public }
State of Delaware }
appointed Sept. 30, 1909, }
Term 4 years. }
Be It Remembered, that
on this fourth day of
April in the year of our
Lord one thousand nine
hundred and eleven, per-
sonally came before me,
Clifford V. Manning, a
Notary Public for the State

of Delaware George H. Johnson and Mary A. Johnson his wife, parties to this indenture, known to me personally to be such, and severally acknowledged this indenture to be their deed, and the said Mary A. Johnson, wife of George H. Johnson, being at the same time privately examined by me apart from her husband acknowledged that she executed the said indenture willingly without compulsion or threats or fear of her husband's displeasure. Given under my Hand and Seal of office the day and year aforesaid.

Clifford V. Manning,
Notary Public.

Received for Record April 4th A.D. 1911,
A. V. L. George,
Recorder.

This Indenture, made the Eighth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eleven, - -
Between, Francis J. Walsh, single man, of the City of Wilmington, County of New Castle and State of Delaware, party of the first part; and Florence D. Lichtenstein, of the same City, County and State, party of the second part. - - -
Witnesseth that the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of Twenty - Six Hundred Dollars (\$2600) current lawful money of the United States of America, unto him well and truly paid by the said party of the second part, at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, has granted, bargained, sold, aliened, enfeoffed, released, conveyed and confirmed and by these presents does grant, bargain, sell, alien, enfeoff, release, convey and confirm unto the said party of the second part her Heirs and



WASHINGTON HOUSE

VICTOR G. WILLIS
PROPRIETOR

First-class accommodations
to the traveling public
Steam heat and electric light
LIVERY ATTACHED

Newark, Del Aug 10 1912

Mr. Riz

Dear Sir
being a Paper Mill. Mill-
wright, with Special
experience in arranging
Machinery for Pulping Cotton
for Fibre use. with exp
all over the U. S. think
I could be of use to you
& any references you could wish
I am

Truly Yours


A W Scott
Elkton

#3. Cecil Co Md

+ would like to arrange
for an interview at any time
for 2 weeks phone Arthur Scott Elkton

WASHINGTON HOUSE



VICTOR G. WILLIS
 PROPRIETOR
 First-class accommodations
 to the traveling public
 Steam heat and electric light
 LIVERY ATTACHED

Newark, Del. Jan. 30 1910

Herbert H. Pitts -
 Los Angeles Calif.
 Co. Hotel Westminster
 P. O. Box 1000 of Newark
 J. Pitts Philadelphia -
 Frederick Pitts -

WASHINGTON HOUSE
VICTOR G. WILLIS
PROPRIETOR
First-class accommodations
to the traveling public
Steam heat and electric light
LIVERY ATTACHED



Newark, Del. Jan. 30 1913

Herbert H. Ritz -
Los Angeles, Calif.
% Hotel Westminster
Pay to the order of Herbert
H. Ritz Thirty Dollars -
Frederick Ritz -

Vic Willis, Paid \$2,100 as 27-Game Hill Wrecker Now Hotel Owner on Diamond Savings of

THANKS GAME FOR BUSINESS ∴ And for

Fulfilled Life Ambition
By Buying Hostelry on
Retiring Majors

Wrecker, Who Succeeded in N. L. 13
Years, Received No-Hitter and
Other High Honors; Keeps All
His Old Contracts in Safe

By DON ASENFELDER
Of the Philadelphia Record

NEWARK, Del.—In the current era of high-cost pitching (good and otherwise) \$1,000 per victory is considered mere pocket money by top-notch big league pitchers. Vic Willis, however, remembers when he racked up 27 no-hitters in the National League and received \$2,100 for his efforts. "And Willis told us, 'I was being a holdout for some close to \$300,000 because I had the audacity to ask for a \$300,000 a year work the year before. 'I got the \$2,100 a year to get so much dough in those days, when a pitcher was called on every afternoon or so, just to keep him from going starry-eyed or loafing.'"

Thirteen years ago, Willis stepped out of baseball, leaving behind him one of the most colorful careers of his period, to embark on the hotel business and he's still at the same old stand. It's the Washington House on Main street, just across from the postoffice in this college town of 4,500, of whom 950 attend the University of Delaware. Willis not only is owner and manager, but he also is room clerk, taproom keeper and bellhop.

Vic has remodeled his hostelry, lifted its face a couple of times, added more rooms and modernized it generally, yet the hotel stationery still reads:

"WASHINGTON HOUSE, Victor G. Willis, proprietor: first class accommodations to the traveling public. Steam heat and electric light."

On either side of the stationery masthead is an eagle, significant of Washington, resting on a baseball. Willis bought the stationery when he first went into the hotel business and when he needs a fresh supply, still orders reprints.

"People aren't as fussy about their writing paper as they are about their rooms and food," smiled Vic behind his spectacles. He was 65 on April 12, last.

Fulfilled Lifetime Ambition
in Purchase of Hotel

THERE are some who think Vic Willis retired from baseball at the top of his game and others who insist the six-foot two-inch curve ball specialist was all but washed up when he made his exit.

But here's what Vic says: "I always wanted to own a hotel, even when I was a kid in these parts, and it was always the Washington House that interested me. When I went into baseball, my goal was the purchase of that hotel. So I saved my money and in 1911, when I had \$40,000, I acquired it. There never was any more thought of baseball for me after that."

"Sure, I might have been able to go along for three or four more years—with a good team behind me—but I didn't want to gamble on it with all my money tied up in the hotel."

Willis was married February 8, 1900, to Mary J. Minnis of Brooklyn, who was, and still is, as enthusiastic as Vic about operating a hotel. They have a son and daughter.

Victor Gazaway Willis, Jr., a chemical engineer, pitched and played first base on the same team with Charlie Keller at the University of Maryland. Junior, who soars to the height of six feet six inches, was the center on the basketball team. He was not interested in professional ball, though Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senators, personally scouted him at college. Vic, Jr., is superintendent of the Triumph Explosives Company, Elkton, Md., a few miles from Newark. J. B. Decker, president of the powder company, is young Vic's brother-in-law, having married his sister Gertrude.

"I'm something of a collegian myself, though I never went to college," Vic, Sr., grinned. "In the nineties, when Delaware College—the present university—had an enrollment of 95 to 100 students, there were times when it couldn't field a complete football or baseball team. So it scoured the streets of Newark for strong boys to fill in. That's how I happened to play fullback for Delaware College in 1893."

Started With "Y" Team
in '94 at \$5 a Game

IN 1894, Willis received his first baseball money—\$5 a game pitching for the Wilmington Y. M. C. A. The following year he hurled for Harrisburg in the Penn State League, until Harrisburg quit the loop, and finished the season with Lynchburg in the Virginia State League. Syracuse in the Eastern League was his next stop, in 1896, and he took part in 17 games before contracting diphtheria and being interned in a hospital for three weeks.

In 1897, Syracuse won the Eastern League flag and Willis notched 21 of the Salt City's 86 triumphs. National League scouts swarmed around the young pitcher and Boston, managed by Frank Selee, proved the successful bidder.

In his first season in the majors, 1898, Boston won its second straight championship in the 12-club National League, winning 102 and losing 47, with Vic tabbing



AS A MATINEE IDOL in the 90's with the BOSTON NATIONALS



VIC TURNS BACK TIME IN HIS BACKYARD



AMONG HIS SOUVENIRS—WILLIS' COLLECTION OF PLAYER CONTRACTS



VIC AT THE DESK OF HIS HOTEL IN NEWARK, DEL.

Garry's Gesture
Garry Herrmann, president of the Cincinnati Reds and chairman of the National Commission, pulled "one for the book," in 1906, Vic Willis relates.
"As head of the National Commission, Herrmann decided that Catcher Ed Phelps, signed by the Pittsburgh Pirates and claimed by the Boston Red Sox, reverted to the American League club. That was sometime in June. The next month, Herrmann and Barney Dreyfuss, Pirates' president, almost mixed punches over the decision. Then Garry personally purchased the Red Sox' right to Phelps and turned him over to Pittsburgh gratis, appeasing Dreyfuss' wrath."

23 decisions. Among them were a two-hit performance, a three-hitter and six four-hit games.

"I received \$1,800 my first season," Willis continued, "and I really earned it. We had five pitchers, Kid Nichols, Jack Stivers, who also played in the outfield; Parson Lewis, Lefty Fred Klobedanz and myself. Regular relief pitchers had not come into style and a pitcher had to be all but maimed before they took him out."

Willis made his bow as a major leaguer on April 20, 1898, at Baltimore, after the Orioles had knocked out Pitcher Jimmy Sullivan.

"Baltimore led, 10 to 3, when I took over in the sixth," Vic related. "The next day's papers reported that I was perceptibly nervous and unsteady. Baltimore scored four runs off me in the sixth and added four more in the eighth. We lost, 18 to 3."

Boston's batting order included Billy Hamilton, Fred Tenney, Herman Long, Hugh Duffy, Jimmy Collins, Chick Stahl, Bobby Lowe and Marty Bergen. Baltimore's famous Orioles had John J. McGraw, Willie Keeler, Hughie Jennings, Joe Kelley, Jake Stenzel, Gene DeMontreville, Dan McGann, Noisy Bill Clarke and Jimmy McJames.

Nine days later, April 29, Willis made another appearance in the box for Boston, this time as a starting pitcher at Washington, and won, 11 to 4.

Vic was a strikeout artist, and at Boston, June 14, 1898, he created a league record for strikeouts, with 11 in seven innings, but the Phillies pounded him and Relief Pitcher Klobedanz for 17 hits and a 9 to 0 shutout. He also was a wild man that day.

Shortstop Zeke Wrigley, who belonged to New York.

It was against Big Bill Dinneen, who was to become an American League mound star and later on an umpire in the junior major, that Vic pitched a no-hitter, August 7, 1899, at Boston. Dinneen, hurling for Washington, was the target of a 14-hit attack, Boston winning, 7 to 1. Washington's only run came in the first inning through two bases on balls, a wild throw by Catcher Marty Bergen on an attempted steal by First Baseman Dan McGann.

Willis' 3.29 earned-run figure topped all National League curvers in 1899 and his five shutouts also led the circuit.

One of Vic's cherished relics which he keeps locked in his hotel safe is a contract which he didn't sign for 1900. It set forth that his salary was to be \$1,800 with a bonus of \$300 "if his conduct, behavior and playing skill shall be satisfactory during the season."

"That was the winter I held out for \$2,400 and it wasn't until the 1900 season was ready to start that Boston club officials decided they could afford to give me the \$300 increase," said Willis.

Tragedy Involved Bergen, Vic's Star Batterymate

THE Beantowners suffered a severe blow to their pennant visions when Marty Bergen killed his wife and child and then himself at North Brookfield, Mass., January 9, 1900. "Bergen was a great catcher and was my batterymate most of the time with Boston," Willis recalled. "He helped me considerably, as I was both fast and wild."

Adding to Vic's difficulties, he had a sore arm most of the season and finished with nine triumphs and 16 losses. Brooklyn again proved the pacesetter and Boston wound up fourth.

Willis and Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants signed contracts with the Athletics to make their American League debut in Philadelphia in 1901, Vic revealed.

"Connie Mack came to see me in Newark in the winter of 1900 and offered me \$3,500 to pitch for the Athletics in 1901," said Willis. "I agreed. Later, I reconsidered, especially when the Boston club notified me that it would meet the A's figures."

"Two years later, Frank Dwyer, representing the Detroit Tigers, came to me with a \$9,000 offer for a two-year contract. At the time the American League was making serious inroads on the National by luring our players away with more money. Boston lost Bill Dinneen, Chick Stahl, Jimmy Collins, Buck Freeman, Hugh Duffy and others."

"Being loyal to Boston, I communicated with club officials and they met the \$9,000 bid by giving me \$4,200 in cash outright and \$400 a month."

Tragedy stalked the diamond at Philadelphia, August 8, 1903, when Willis pitched Boston to a 5 to 4 victory over the Phillies in the 12-inning opener of a scheduled double-header, which was never completed.

"I was in the dressing room, changing my clothes during the second game, when

I heard a terrific crash," said Vic. "I discovered the overhanging gallery in the left field bleachers had collapsed, carrying with it several hundred fans. Twelve were killed and 282 injured. Police, firemen, players of both teams and spectators were helping to extricate those imprisoned in the debris."

The crash ended the second game in the fourth inning, with the score tied at 5-5.

Traded as "Washed-Up,"
Vic Won 23 for Pirates

IT SEEMS that Fred Tenney, who became manager in 1905 at Boston, figured Willis had lost his effectiveness when he dropped 23 games that year, so he traded Vic to Pittsburgh, December 15, 1905, for Infielder Dave Brain, Substitute Player George E. Howard and Pitcher Vivian A. Lindeman.

With the Pirates in 1906, Willis worked 322 innings in 41 games, winning 23 and losing 13. He was high winner among the Bucs' hurlers. Again in 1907, it was Willis who paced the Pirate pitchers, with 21 triumphs against 11 defeats.

The 1908 campaign saw the Cubs win the pennant by defeating New York in a post-season playoff game. The Giants and Pirates finished in a dead heat for second place, with 98 victories and 56 losses each. Willis and a youngster, Nick Maddox, won 46 of Pittsburgh's games between them. Vic had a record of 23 and 11 and Maddox 23 and eight.

An overflow crowd of 30,338 turned out for the opening of Pittsburgh's \$1,000,000 Forbes Field, June 30, 1909, and Willis hooked up with Ed Reulbach of the Cubs in a duel that was won by Chicago, 3 to 2. "All I remember about that game was that the women fans wore long dresses—real long ones," Vic said.

An attack of quinsy handicapped Willis in the 1909 World Series with Detroit. However, Fred Clarke sent him to the relief of Howard Cannitz in the second game. The Tigers had come from behind to drive Cannitz to cover in the third inning with a three-run uprising. They picked up two more runs and three hits in the last six and one-third innings off Willis. Detroit won, 7 to 2.

How Cobb Stole Home
On Willis in 1909 Series

TY COBB gave the crowd of 31,114 a thrill such as only Ty could provide, in the third inning, when he stole home on Willis. Here's how it happened: Davey Jones was safe on First Baseman Abstein's muff of a throw. Donie Bush singled and Cobb walked. With the bases loaded, Sam Crawford went out on a short fly to Manager Fred Clarke. Next, Jim Delahanty singled, Jones and Bush scoring. Willis replaced Cannitz at this juncture and George Moriarty was the batter. Cobb took a lead off third and came racing in like a greyhound as Vic let go the pitch to Moriarty. Ty made a long slide around Catcher George Gibson and was safe.

"That's one thing I'll never forget as long as I live," declared Willis. "I didn't think Cobb could beat the throw. I often got razzed for letting Ty get away with that theft, but I don't think anybody could have prevented it."

"If it hadn't been for young Babe Adams winning three games for us, I don't believe we would have taken that Series, though when you get by Cobb and Crawford and Pitchers George Mullin and Bill Donovan, Detroit wasn't a great team."

Willis started against the Tigers in the sixth game of that Series, but was yanked after five innings, during which the American leaguers collected seven hits and four runs off him. The Tigers won, 5 to 4.

In addition to his \$4,500 salary, which he was paid during each of his four years at Pittsburgh, Willis also drew a winning share of the 1909 World's Series, which amounted to \$1,825.22.

Evidently, the Pirate management figured that it had rung every available victory out of Vic's once-mighty right arm, for he was sold for \$5,000 to the St. Louis Cardinals for 1910. Roger Bresnahan, who then was manager of the Cardinals, always had admired Willis' pitching, so when the Bucs placed him on the market, the Duke of Yraley made a grab for him.

St. Louis had a seventh-place team and an in-and-out set of throwers. Vic participated in 212 innings in his thirteenth and last year under the Big Top, registering nine victories against a dozen setbacks. When September 1 came, Bresnahan paid off Vic and sent him home to Newark. Willis never threw another baseball in professional baseball.

"Jack Dunn of the Baltimore Orioles had sold me to the Cubs, but I told him I intended to retire from the game," Vic continued. "I kept the Baltimore contract for a souvenir."

to play hav
Ti
ing
lega
tion.
to p
sign
and
perm
part
tract,
club,
paid
origin
The
bars
er."
by es
Piedn
playe
ficatic
er" s
woul
perier
Exe
ing in
outsta
Bael
Pr
API
head
club
candic
State
of Es
mit h
sessio
Nov
Bae
the r
as pr
14 years.
LESLIE E. ARNOLD
sent me a contract for 1911, after St. Louis had sold me to the Cubs, but I told him I intended to retire from the game," Vic continued. "I kept the Baltimore contract for a souvenir."
Willis hasn't seen more than one or two major league games in 20 years, but he likes the way baseball has been speeded up. He doesn't know how he would have fared as a pitcher in these streamlined days of throwing. However, when it comes to tough batters, there was none, in his estimation, like a Dutchman named Hans Wagner. As a manager, Fred Clarke was tops in his book.
Besides running his hotel, which includes a taproom, Vic raises bird dogs and hunts occasionally. He also likes stud poker. It's a life he enjoys, but he still gets a thrill from his diamond memories—and from the sheaf of contracts he keeps locked in his safe, among his other treasured possessions.

Contact the Hall of Fame

Main Contact Information

National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum
25 Main Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

Phone:

(607) 547-7200

Toll-free:

(888) HALL-OF-FAME
(888) 425-5633

Fax:

(607) 547-2044

Hall of Fame Membership Program

Membership, group sales, special events: 1-888-
HALL-OF-FAME or (888) 425-5633

Fax: (607) 547-2044

Education Department

Phone: (607) 547-0362

Museum Shop

Shop online

Phone orders, catalog requests and customer
service: 1-888-HALL-OF-FAME or (888) 425-5633

A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center

Phone: (607) 547-0330 or (607) 547-0335

Fax: (607) 547-4094

Photography Department

Phone: (607) 547-0375

Fax: (607) 547-4094

Email the Hall Of Fame

Your Name

Your Email Address

Department

Subject

Question and/or Comment

Date of Birth

- mm - - dd - Year

Favorite Baseball Team

Favorite Hall Of Famer

Film, Video, and Recorded Sound Department

Phone: (607) 547-0314

Public Relations Department

Media should use this contact information:

Phone: (607) 547-7200

Toll-free: 1-(888) HALL-OF-FAME or (888) 425-5633

Fax: (607) 547-2044

Reset

Submit



Welcome to the

Delaware Library Catalog

user ID: [input field]

PIN: [input field]

What's This?

Librarian Info

Library Hours Policies & Procedure E-Book Help Apply for Library Card

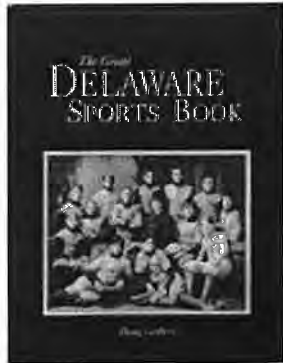
The First State's First Choice

[Español](#)

[Search/Home](#) [Find It Fast!](#) [Kids' Library](#) [I Need Material](#) [Internet & More](#) [My Account](#)
[Contact Us](#) [Digital Collections](#) [Have You Read?](#) [Magazines & More \(DelAWARE\)](#)
[New Castle County Library Catalog](#) [DTCC Library Home Page](#) [DE SchoolRooms](#)
[Wilmington Library Catalog](#) [Ask a Librarian](#)

[Go Back](#) [Help](#) [New Search](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [X-Refs](#) [Change Display](#) [My List](#)
[Logout](#)

record 3 of 6 for search words or phrase ""sports""



Item Information	Catalog Record
The great Delaware sports book Gelbert, Doug.	
Publisher: Manatee Books,	
Pub date: c1995.	
Description: 222 p. :	
ISBN: 0964442701	
Item info: 1 copy available at Delaware Public Archives.	
Holdings Change Holdings Display	
Delaware Public Archives	Copies Material Location
GV584.D3 G45 1995	1 Book Reference Material

Place Hold
Find more by this author
Find more on these topics
Nearby items on shelf

Continue search in:

[Google](#)

You Found Titles in Categories:

Ms DONOVAN

I would like to suggest a
New historical marker that would
pay tribute to Vic Willis.

The Washington House Hotel later
became the Stone Balloons, which
was torn down earlier this year.

~~THE~~ If Judy Johnson and
the Deer Park have markers then
Vic Willis and the Washington
House/Stone Balloons certainly ARE
at least equally deserving.

DO NOT AWARE PIRATE
ARCHIVES

2006 NOV 24 PM 2:34

Thank you

STEVE GOETZ

101 DALLAS AVE

NEWARK DE

19711-5125

302-737-8492