

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. M35/46

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Walter P. Johnson house

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 9100 Old Georgetown Road not for publicationcity, town Bethesda vicinity of congressional district 8

state Maryland county Montgomery

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Elizabeth Fleming

street & number 1017 Encino Road telephone no.: 619-435-6930

city, town Coronado state and zip code California 92118

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse liber 2879

street & number folio 541

city, town Rockville state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. M: M: 35-46

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

(SEE ATTACHED SHEETS)

8. Significance

Survey No. M: 35-46

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) sports
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1905-06 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

(SEE ATTACHED SHEETS)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. M: 35-46

Montgomery County Land, Assessment, and Corporation Records
Photos and articles in Johnson family scrapbooks; interview with Carolyn Ann Johnson Thomas, January 1988; Roger L. Treat, Walter Johnson: King of the Pitchers (1948); Bill James, Historical Baseball Abstract (1986); Doree G. Holman, Old Bethesda (1956); Andrea Rebeck, Montgomery County in the Early 20th Century (1937).

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 41, 42, and 43 on Plat 11/798, Subdivision of Walter P. Johnson tract, Alta Vista

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eileen McGuckian

organization _____ date February 1988

street & number P. O. Box 4262 telephone 301-762-0096

city or town Rockville state Maryland 20850

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Section #7 Description

This large square Colonial Revival house is executed in what is sometimes termed the "Free Colonial" style. The combination of symmetry, sizeable massing, classical detailing, and Victorian irregularity produces an elegance which bridges popular architectural styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The 2 1/2 story 3 bay by 3 bay frame residence sits on a high fieldstone foundation. Its ample proportions suggest prosperity, and the large windows and porch convey a feeling of light and grace. The hipped roof, covered with asphalt, peaks at the center; it is broken on the north and south slopes by tall chimneys and on the east and west slopes by dormers.

The house features a narrow clapboard siding, mostly 1/1 double-hung sash windows with plain trim, and a full-width front porch. It faces east, maintaining its historic orientation to Old Georgetown Road and the trolley line. Two contemporary residences are located a few blocks north on Old Georgetown Road, like the Johnson house lessened both by subdivision and road widening.

The house looks almost the way it did when the Johnsons came in 1925. (see photos attached). The front (east) facade features a prominent entrance centered between paired 1/1 windows flanked by louvered shutters. The six-panelled wooden door is framed by molded pilasters capped with bullseyes, flanked by 5-sectioned sidelights, and surmounted by a 4-light transom. On the second floor, the symmetry is continued with 15-light double doors in the center bay and a single large window on either side. The hipped roof is broken by a central hipped-roof dormer with paired windows. Across the width of this facade is a porch with slightly-sloped shed tin-covered roof, wide fascia, tapered Doric columns, plain square balusters, and brick piers connected by wood lattice. The porch ceiling is of narrow wainscoting, and the wooden floor appears to be laid over a similar earlier one. Newer wood porch steps lead off to the north of the building.

On the first story of the north facade, there is a paired 1/1 window in the east bay, and a smaller paired 2/2 hinged window in the west bay. The central bay, and the two windows on the second story, are single 1/1 double-hung sash. Two small basement windows are boarded up.

The south facade, which faces Oakmont Avenue, provides a bit of Victorian whimsey with its two-story diagonal-sided protruding bays at the east and west ends of this facade. Each of the protruding bays has single central windows on the first and second stories. Three of the diagonal apertures are doors which once opened onto porches. Under the wide eave is a flat fascia and narrow wainscoting. Between the bays on the first floor is an enclosed porch with triple 1/1 windows, narrow clapboard siding, brick piers, and a nearly-flat tin roof; a second-story sleeping porch shown in the Johnson photograph no longer exists. There are two basement windows.

The rear (west) facade abandons the symmetry of the others. Its windows range from standard 1/1 to a tiny 2/2 hinged opening; one window opening has been enlarged to accommodate a door, and a door opening has been reduced to window size. A modern wooden fire escape with three landings has been added.

Section 7 cont.

A scattering of large trees remain on the property; new pines and other landscaping have replaced the windmill, grape arbor, and baseball diamond. Two asphalt parking lots are connected by a drive, and can be accessed by either Old Georgetown Road or Oakmont Avenue.

The interior of the house reflects the same architectural transition as the exterior; bullseye molding and transoms of the late 19th century reside comfortably alongside open archways and spacious rooms from the early 20th century. The floor plan is little changed from the Johnson occupancy, although the grandeur of the entrance has been lessened by reduction of the stairway space. The south front room, used by the Johnsons as a music and trophy room, retains traffic patterns onto the former sun porch and into the dining room to the west. The attic rooms are brightened by the two dormers, and the basement fieldstone reflects the contours of the house. The interior could be restored to its 1925 appearance without much alteration.

Section #8 Significance

SUMMARY

This house is significant as an example of turn-of-the-century speculative construction in the Montgomery County suburbs, newly connected to Washington, D.C. by electric railway, and as an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture. It is also important for its association with Walter P. Johnson (1887-1946), pitcher and manager for the Washington Senators baseball team, as he lived here from 1925 to 1936.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

In 1890 the Tennallytown and Rockville Railroad Company was incorporated, and plans for the new electric railway line to parallel the old Georgetown-to-Rockville Road into Montgomery County were set. The line ran from Washington to Alta Vista, just beyond Bethesda, where in 1891 the Bethesda Park amusement center was constructed. Washingtonians rode the trolley to stay at the hotel and to enjoy the zoo, botanical garden, rides, and dance hall.

Owners of farmland tracts along Old Georgetown Road formed or sold to development companies which subdivided the large parcels into desirable suburban lots or country estates, the drawing card being easy access by trolley between Washington and the Montgomery County countryside.

In 1899, five D.C. and Montgomery County residents incorporated "The Creston Land and Improvement Company of Montgomery County". Its objects and purposes were "buying, selling, subdividing, mortgaging, leasing, improving, disposing of or otherwise dealing in lands in this State or partly in this State and partly beyond this State, and the building and erection of, operating, leasing, selling, mortgaging, improving or otherwise disposing of schools, hotels, boarding houses, dwelling houses or residences, stables or other buildings...." With its principal office in Bethesda, and capital stock of \$20,000, the company planned to develop acreage newly purchased along Old Georgetown Road. Prospects were enhanced by proximity to the new electric railway.¹

During the next four years, Creston Land and Improvement Company sold off 22 parcels ranging from one-half to ten acres each. Most of the transactions also involved the Bethesda Land Company of Montgomery County, which incorporated in 1901 with some of the same individuals and identical purposes as Creston's.² Many of these parcels were identified as being located in "Alta Vista". Parcels were sometimes sold with buildings on them, and with the two land companies providing substantial mortgages to purchasers. Most of the purchasers listed Washington, D.C. addresses and, interestingly enough, a number of them were women.

Creston Land and Improvement Company in 1901 sold three acres to Fannie Thomas, who sold to Lenora Channon two years later; both women lived in Washington, D.C. The house first appeared on the tax rolls in 1906, with improvements valued at \$3500, household furniture at \$300.³

Section 8 cont.

Lenora Channon's summer house was constructed in a "country version" of the Colonial Revival style of architecture popular around the turn of the century. It incorporated some elaborate detailing of late 19th century Victorian residential architecture as well as some of the simpler features of the 20th century return to classical forms.

In 1908, Ms. Channon sold the house to Ralph E. Burgess of Washington, D.C., who added a 5.57 acre parcel, for a total of 8.57 acres. As he retained a D.C. address when he sold the property to Frank and Mariam Steward in 1917, presumably he kept the property for summer use.⁴

The hopes of the Creston and Bethesda land companies were dampened by Bethesda Park's destruction by fire before 1900; the railroad company quickly negotiated an extension of the line to the County Fairgrounds. Also, the slowness of commuting by trolley discouraged many Washington families from using their suburban houses as more than summer retreats. Not until the 1920s, when the automobile came into common usage, on roads newly improved or constructed by the State Roads Commission, did more than a few areas in Montgomery County begin to develop as true residential suburbs. Trolley service was abandoned along the Tennallytown to Rockville line by the end of the 1930s.

The property changed hands in rapid succession, all of the owners being residents of Washington, D.C. The Stewards did not keep the property long, selling it to James E. and Nellie S. Wick in 1920.⁵ The Wicks in turn sold to Elisha Hanson in 1923⁶, and it was Hanson's property which caught the eye of a Washington baseball player who had recently come into some money and wanted to move his wife and four small children out to the country.

Walter Perry Johnson pitched for the Washington Senators from 1907 to 1927. His remarkable pitching and hitting abilities were major reasons behind the Senators' 1924 World Series win. It is possible that he purchased the house at 9100 Old Georgetown Road from his World Series bonus and fees received for writing articles.

Newspapers in July, 1925, reported the popular ballplayer's purchase of "the Elisha Hanson estate" on the Georgetown Road. The location was variously listed as "Alta Vista", "just west of Battery Park", "just west of Edgemoor", and "near Bethesda". The house was described as "an eleven-room residence, modernly equipped, in the center of an 8 1/2 acre tract. There is a wide front lawn, with plenty of shade flowers and shrubbery. In the rear is a four-acre orchard and a grape arbor. There are also coops which will house 2,000 chickens, a feature which appeals to the great pitcher, who is considering going into chicken farming on a large scale during his off months." Included with photographs of the house was speculation as to whether the Johnsons and their young children would make this their year-round residence, or Washington their permanent home.⁷

The Johnson children have fond memories of life at 9100 Old Georgetown Road. There was a rose garden, a grape arbor, stands of pine and apple trees, a windmill and a tenant house. And of course there was a baseball diamond.⁸

Section 8 cont.

Walter Johnson managed the Washington Senators from 1929 to 1932, moving on to Cleveland where he concluded his baseball career in 1935. The Johnsons lived on Old Georgetown Road through 1936, although Hazel Lee Johnson died in 1930 and Walter's mother came to live with them and to raise the five children. Johnson raised chickens, which he generously made available for local fundraisers.⁹

Walter Johnson, known as the Big Train, was one of the first five players inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936, along with Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, Babe Ruth, and Honus Wagner. Johnson's Hall of Fame inscription reads: "Conceded to be fastest ball pitcher in history of game. Won 414 games with losing team behind him many years. Holder of strike out and shut out records." Many consider Johnson the greatest right-handed pitcher of all time. Known primarily for his fastball pitch, Johnson for many years held both pitching and hitting records.¹⁰

In the summer of 1936, Walter Johnson sold his home in Alta Vista to Harry Hoskinson and Eugene B. Casey.¹¹ Johnson purchased a 552-acre farm in Germantown (now the site of Seneca Valley High School) and moved his family out there. Walter Johnson continued his involvement with Montgomery County by serving as a County Commissioner from 1938 to 1940 and 1942 until his death of a brain tumor on December 10, 1946. He was the Republican nominee for Congress in 1940. A public high school was named in his honor in 1956.

Hoskinson and Casey subdivided the 8.34 acres in "Alta Vista" into 43 lots¹². The two largest lots faced Old Georgetown Road -- #43, on which the Johnson house was located, and #1, at the corner of newly-created Johnson Avenue.

Julian Bauserman purchased the former Johnson house on Lot 43, along with adjacent lots 41 and 42, in 1938.¹³ The property then was owned by the Fry and McKee families, who sold to Admiral Thomas Buchanan Dugan in 1944.¹⁴ The present owner, a step-daughter of Admiral Dugan, was deeded the property in 1961. It is currently leased to a tutoring business.

¹Montgomery County Corporation Record EBP1/273, March 7, 1899; Land Records, TD8/16, March 11, 1899.

²Corporation Record EBP1/293, March 25, 1901.

³Land Records, TD19/225, December 26, 1901; 176/74, December 15, 1903; Assessment Records, 1900-1906.

⁴Land Records, 200/5, July 25, 1908; 264/30, April 30, 1917.

⁵Ibid., 292/452.

⁶Ibid., 324/469.

⁷Scrapbooks in possession of Carolyn Thomas, Walter Johnson's daughter; see attachment A.

⁸Carolyn Thomas, interview February 1988.

⁹Elsie Bissett Moore, teacher at Montrose School from 1930 to 1944, recalls every schoolchild's conviction that he was eating a chicken raised by Walter Johnson.

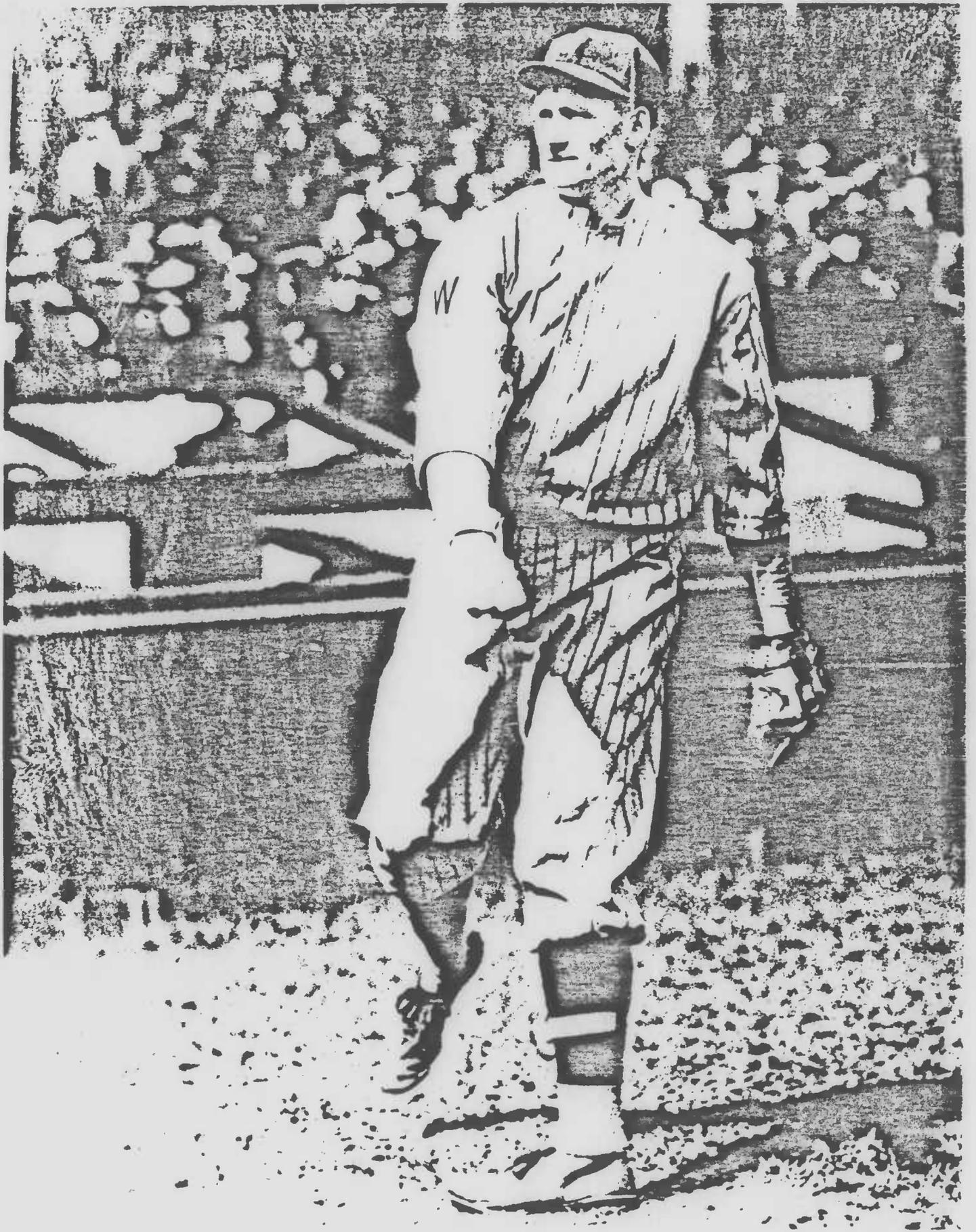
¹⁰Historical Baseball Abstract (Bill James, 1986); Walter Johnson: King of the Pitchers, (Roger L. Treat, 1948).

¹¹Land Records, 632/169, June 15, 1936.

¹²Plat 11/798, February 1937.

¹³Land Records, 695/226.

¹⁴928/205, January 3, 1944.



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