



FRANKLIN COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OTTAWA, KANSAS

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Historical documentary celebrating town team baseball and its impact on early Kansas coming to Ottawa on June 9

Ottawa, Kansas—A new documentary film that captures both the heart and the historical importance of town team baseball on early life in Kansas is coming to Ottawa.

As part of the Old Depot Museum's current major exhibit, *Small-Town Ball: Playing America's Game in Ottawa and Franklin County*, the museum will offer a special showing of ***Town Teams: Bigger than Baseball*** on June 9 at 7 p.m. at the Plaza Cinema, 209 South Main in Ottawa, Kansas. Tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased at the door.

Before the movie, the Old Depot Museum's *Small-Town Ball* exhibit will be open during special evening hours from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Admission to the exhibit is free that evening.

Town Teams examines baseball at the turn of the 20th century, when hundreds of small Kansas towns formed teams to play for pride and love of the game. That passion and the fierce competitiveness of the players and fans became part of the culture that helped build Kansas. *Town Teams* explores the role baseball played in everything from assimilating immigrants to labor relations to its function as a powerful tool in the battle between towns for economic supremacy.

The 40-minute documentary short was written and directed by Kansas City filmmaker Mark Honer. Honer portrays the heart of the game when cameras capture a former town team player as he watches film of himself from some 70 years earlier.

"When I started researching the film, I fell in love with the players," said Honer. "Most of them put in 70 hours a week at their jobs. But when the weekend came, they put on these heavy, wool uniforms and played baseball in the scorching hot sun. Now *that's* loving the game."

The film brings the drama of a long-forgotten era to life with photos that reach back over 100 years and a reenactment of a 1919 baseball game played near El Dorado. The cultural context is provided by an all-star list of baseball authors and historians.

"The amateur baseball players reflect the real America," says Dorothy Seymour Mills, who co-authored the first scholarly history of the game. Her three-volume history, which includes *Baseball: The Early Years (1960)*, *The Golden Age (1971)*, and *The People's Game (1990)*, still stands as the benchmark against which other baseball history books are measured.

Honer also interviews state and local baseball historians like Phil Dixon, an award-winning author and researcher on Negro Leagues baseball. Dixon has traveled to more than 100 small towns where the Kansas City Monarchs played during the early to mid-1900s.

"I think there's a golden age of town baseball that's even greater than the major leagues," Dixon said.

Town Teams: Bigger than Baseball is produced and distributed by Destination Hope LLC, d.b.a. DHTV Digital, a film and video production company in Shawnee, Kansas. The trailer is available at <https://vimeo.com/150483088>.

The Old Depot Museum strives to educate visitors about the importance of trains in small towns and the history of Franklin County, Kansas. It is operated by the Franklin County Historical Society.

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