

“Shoeless” Joe Jackson

Greenville’s Baseball Legend

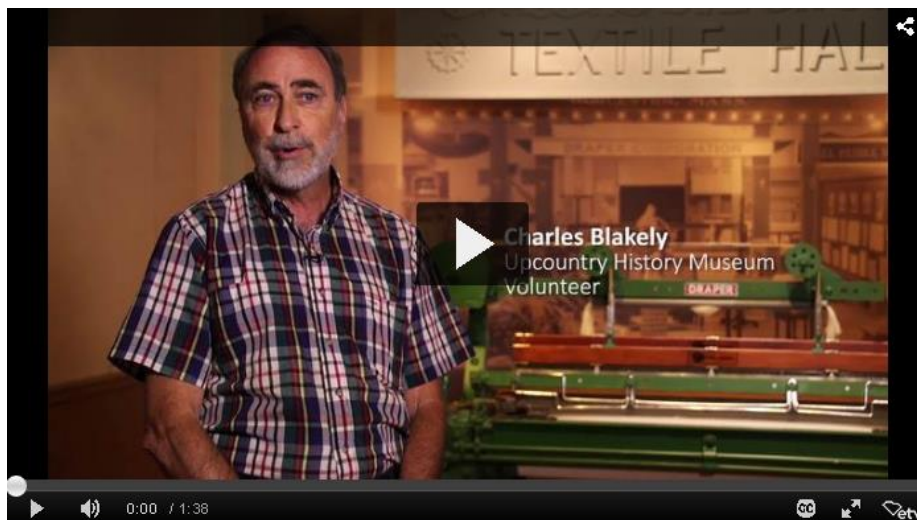
Baseball is called America’s pastime. Have you ever heard that before? A pastime is something that people do when they have time to relax or play. A young man by the name of Abner Doubleday is often credited with developing the game, however many dispute the history of the game is much older. To dig deeper into this particular part of history, click the image below.



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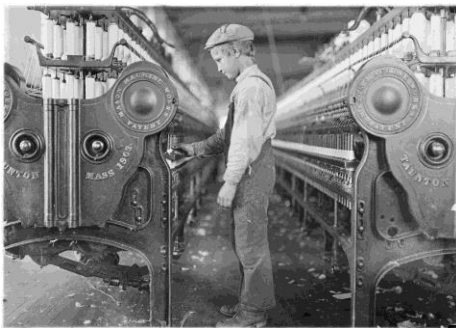
For now, let’s focus on our Upcountry “hero.” Who was Joe Jackson? Joseph W. Jackson was born in rural Pickens County, South Carolina on July 16, 1887. His family was poor. They worked, like so many others, in the cotton mills. Cotton mills, or textile mills, were the employers for the majority of the people in the Upcountry.

Fun Fact: Greenville, South Carolina was known as the textile capital of the world. To learn more about this “claim to fame,” take a listen to one of the Museum’s docent, Charles Blakely, as he discusses life in an Upcountry textile mill.



Life in a Textile Mill Village

Life working in a textile mill could be hard, hot, noisy and tedious. To relieve the stress, mill owners and workers would form sports teams, mostly playing baseball, but also some basketball as well. The teams were a way to bond together and have fun. Mill villages also played games against other mill villages, and the competition was intense. These teams took great personal pride in their mill village community. Jackson, the oldest of eight children, had started work in a local mill when he was only six or seven years old. Can you imagine such a thing? A young child working nearly sun up to sun down, often times six days a week. Children often worked alongside their parents in the 1800s and even early 1900s. Their work and pay was needed to help support the family, very similar to young children working side by side with their families on their farm. Would you want to have to go to work every day? Learn more about working in a textile mill as a child, by clicking on both of the images below.



The Legend of “Shoeless Joe”

Because Jackson was a textile mill worker, he never attended school. Joe Jackson never learned to read or write, which was fairly common for a lot of textile mill workers, but he did learn to play baseball. Working in the West Greenville Brandon Mill, Jackson played for their sponsored team that faced squads from other mills and factories. Being a natural with his unusually long arms (passed down from his father), and a talent for throwing and hitting the ball, he earned a spot in the lineup when he was only 13 years old. He soon became renowned throughout the Carolinas as an outfielder, pitcher, and home-run hitter, which were known throughout the mill league as “Saturday Specials.”

According to the [Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library](#), “He was so good that his brothers would collect tips from the fans when he hit a home-run.” It did not take long for the professional leagues to notice Jackson. His first professional team, the Philadelphia Athletics, signed him in 1908. Jackson went on to play for the Cleveland Naps and then eventually play for his last team, the Chicago White Sox. He played with many baseball greats, including Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth!

So, why was he nicknamed “Shoeless Joe”? Well that goes back to his days playing on the mill teams. One day his new baseball spikes were really hurting his feet and giving him blisters, so he took them off and kept on playing barefoot. A person in the stands yelled out calling him “Shoeless Joe Jackson” and the nickname stuck. What do you think your nickname should be? Or does your family and friends already call you something special?

Jackson unfortunately banished from baseball due to what many referred to as the “Black Sox Scandal.” Jackson and seven other teammates were accused of conspiring to throw the 1919 World Series. To simplify, they were accused of purposefully losing the World Series for money. Jackson always claimed his innocence and that the accusations were untrue.

Jackson told *The Sporting News* in 1942:

"Regardless of what anybody says, I was innocent of any wrong-doing. I gave baseball all I had. The Supreme Being is the only one to whom I've got to answer. If I had been out there booting balls and looking foolish at bat against the Reds, there might have been some grounds for suspicion. I think my record in the 1919 World Series will stand up against that of any other man in that Series or any other World Series in all history."

Life after the White Sox

Following the “Black Sox Scandal,” in which the trial of 1921 that took the Chicago jury only two hours to render a verdict of not guilty on all counts, Jackson along with the seven other players were still forced to give up their professional baseball careers. So, Jackson and his wife Kate first move to Savannah, Georgia. There they owned a successful dry cleaning business, but ten years later, Jackson and family moved back to the Upcountry. In 1932, Jackson opened a barbeque restaurant on Augusta Street and later a liquor store on Pendleton Street, a stone's throw from Brandon Mill where they both grew up.

For those who like numbers, look up Shoeless Joe Jackson’s stats by clicking the image below:




Shoeless Joe Jackson

Position: Outfielder

Bats: Left • **Throws:** Right

6-1, 200lb (185cm, 90kg)

Born: [July 16, 1887](#) in Pickens County, [SC](#) 

Died: [December 5, 1951](#) (Aged 64-142d) in Greenville, [SC](#)

Buried: [Woodlawn Memorial Park, Greenville, SC](#)

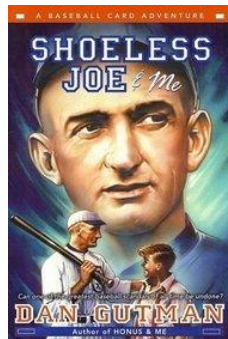
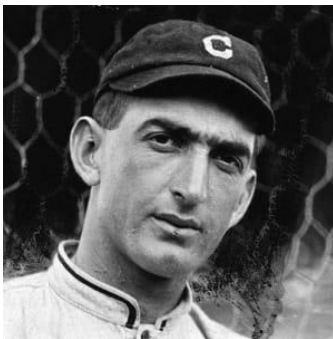
ACTIVITY

Great baseball players have great hand-eye coordination. One way to improve your hand-eye coordination is to learn to juggle! If you'd like to learn, give it a try with the video below!



READ MORE

Want to learn more about "Shoeless Joe Jackson?" Check out these reads below!



Or watch this:

