

# TRAVEL

## Cooperstown has great baseball and much more

BY JULIE BROWN  
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Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa have been in the spotlight lately for their baseball talents. It's fitting that their accomplishments are highlighted at the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum.

When you enter the building in Cooperstown, N.Y., these days, items from the careers of the St. Louis Cardinals and Chicago Cubs sluggers are evident. We saw bats, balls and uniforms during a recent visit, along with items from the late Roger Maris, who had set the previous home run season record of 61 in 1961.

My husband, Mark Rembacki, and I have been to Cooperstown four times now and have enjoyed it more each time. We stay at The Inn at Cooperstown, with hosts innkeeper Michael Jerome and his wife, Marianne Bez, director of guest development.

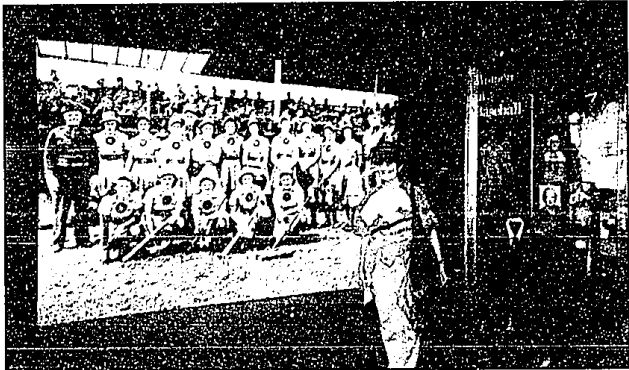
Their interest is beyond baseball, Jerome said to visitors to Cooperstown, home to some 2,600 people. "The opera (Glimmerglass Opera) brings in a lot of people."

On previous visits to the "Village of Museums," we have also visited the nearby Farmers' Museum, reminiscent of Greenfield Village but smaller and with more of a focus on New York state, and the nearby Fenimore House Museum. This time, we decided to concentrate on baseball.

The three-floor Hall of Fame & Museum is a ball-lover's delight, and that's as true for the casual fan as it is for the aficionado. Admission is \$9.50 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens and \$4 for those ages 7-12. Winter hours (Oct. 1 through April 30) are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with open doors to 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays in April, October, November and December.

Summer hours (May 1 through Sept. 30) are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Cooperstown is in central New York state, 70 miles west of Albany. It is 30 miles south of the New York State Thruway.

We drove there each of our four times through Canada, picking up the Thruway in the Buffalo area. The drive took approximately 10 hours, and we chose to stay overnight coming and going.



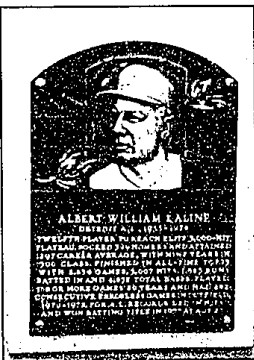
Not just a man's game: Women have played baseball as well. Julie Brown of Plymouth Township, an Observer staffer, poses by an exhibit.

in the Rochester, N.Y., area. On the way home this time, we stopped in at Seneca Falls, N.Y., for a visit to the National Women's Hall of Fame and related sites on women's history. (Seneca Falls was home of the first U.S. women's rights convention in 1848.)

When we got to Cooperstown in September this year, we were eager to see the Hall of Fame & Museum again. Our trips in 1991, 1992 and 1993 had been rewarding, but we certainly weren't jaded.

One of my favorite spots is the Hall of Fame, with its plaques honoring baseball's greats. This year's inductees, George Davis, Larry Doby, Lee MacPhail, Jon Rogan and Don Sutton, garner special recognition, along with all of those inducted since 1936. The Hall of Fame & Museum opened in 1939.

We visited the Hall of Fame Library & Archive, listening to an interesting presentation on the evolution of baseball equipment. (Suffice it to say early catchers often had broken fin-



Big Al: Former Detroit Tiger Al Kalline's plaque is displayed at the Hall of Fame. (Seneca Falls is now a Tiger broadcast center.)

gers.) The library/archive is open to the public for research 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Staff assistance for casual visitors is offered 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and



Local folks: Mark Rembacki and Julie Brown of Plymouth Township see the jerseys of Mark McGwire and his son and Sammy Sosa that they wore the night McGwire set his record.

Sundays in June, July and August.

I enjoyed seeing the exhibit on women in baseball again, along with exhibits on Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron. New to me was an exhibit on black baseball, covering both the black-only leagues and baseball's integration. The late Jackie Robinson, who broke the major league color barrier in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers, is represented. The Hall of Famer's college sweater and military jacket are featured, along with other items. It was interesting to see how baseball was played in the days when Jim Crow ruled, with a "Colored Entrance" sign serving as a reminder of the not-too-distant past.

Cooperstown is small, but its residents seem to exist peacefully with the tourists. "We don't have obnoxious guests," said Jerome of The Inn at Cooperstown. "Most of our guests are very nice. I think most people like the tourists."

This year, Jerome had many visitors from Japan, proof Cooperstown doesn't just draw from New York. The metropolitan New York City area brings many, as does any city with a major league baseball team.

"I get to be a fan around World Series time," admitted Jerome, who doesn't consider himself a baseball fan. The town gets a bit crazy in the summer when each year's honorees are inducted, he said.

We paid a little over \$100 a night for comfortable accommodations, including a spacious front porch with plenty of rocking chairs for rocking and reading. Cooperstown offers less expensive accommodations as well.

All in all, Cooperstown is a fun trip, particularly during ball season; one time, we visited during the playoffs. I'd recommend it to those seeking a fun destination who have at least some interest in baseball; chances are, the true-blue fans have already been.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum can be reached at (888) 425-5633 or on its Web site at [www.baseballhalloffame.org](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org). The Inn at Cooperstown, 16 Chestnut St., Cooperstown 13326, can be reached at (607) 547-5756. The Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce can be reached at (607) 547-9983 or at its Web site at [www.coopers-townchamber.org](http://www.coopers-townchamber.org).

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