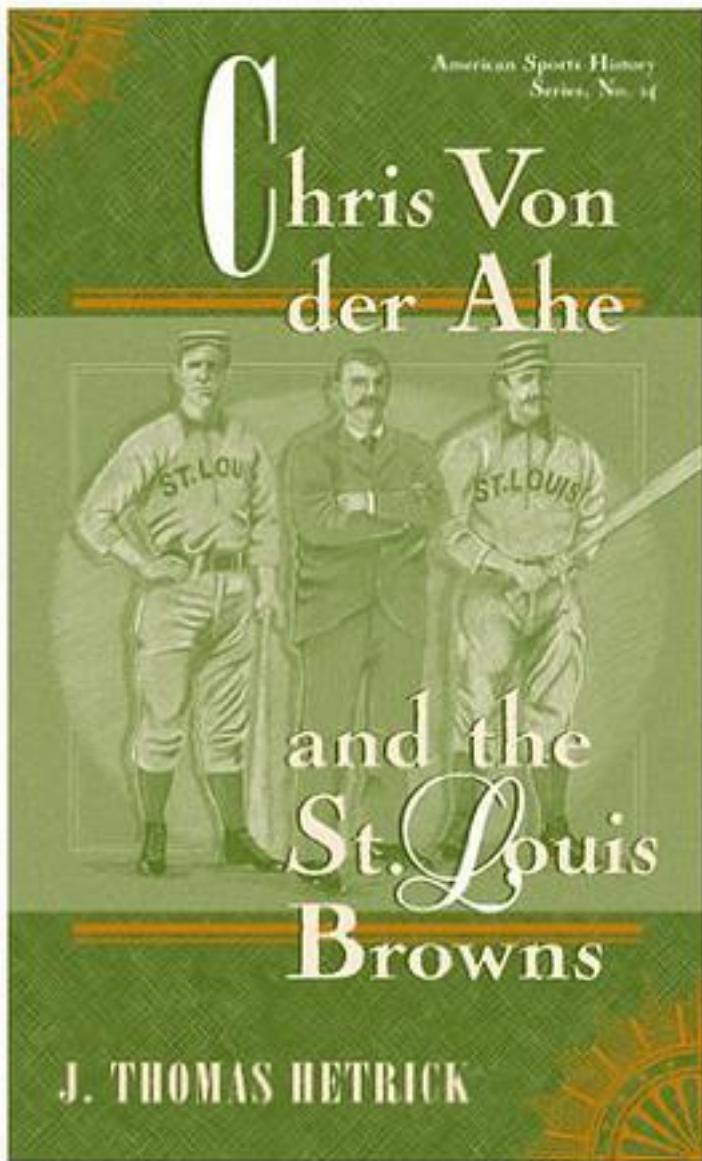


Chris Von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns



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出版者:The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

出版时间:1999-09-15

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780810834736

Chris Von der Ahe emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1867, and settled in St. Louis, Missouri. Starting out as a clerk in a grocery store, he succeeded quickly in buying the grocery store and establishing a saloon in the back. Although Von der Ahe had no special interest in sports, he did notice that fans liked to drop by after a ball game and have a beer. This initial perception launched Von der Ahe on a rollercoaster ride through early American baseball, contributing to his story of luck, pluck, and bravado. Seeing a natural link between baseball and his saloon, Von der Ahe sponsored an American Association baseball team called the St. Louis Browns, the head of a lineage that includes the present-day St. Louis Cardinals. The American Association only lasted for ten years, but through this period Von der Ahe's Browns captured the pennant four years in a row. After a raucous pennant race in 1889 and a full-scale player revolt, the American Association sank into bankruptcy and dissolved. Such a financial disaster is only one of many bizarre and unique events discussed in this insightful and utterly readable biography of one of America's early baseball owners. Bearing uncanny similarity to the iron-willed personas of contemporary baseball owners, Von der Ahe was embroiled in legal battles and baseball disputes for nearly a decade that culminated in his own kidnapping and his stadium being burned to the ground. After being bought out in 1899, Von der Ahe disappeared and died in obscurity in 1913, without a baseball team. With bibliography.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Chris Von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns](#) [下载链接1](#)

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