

Home of Baseball

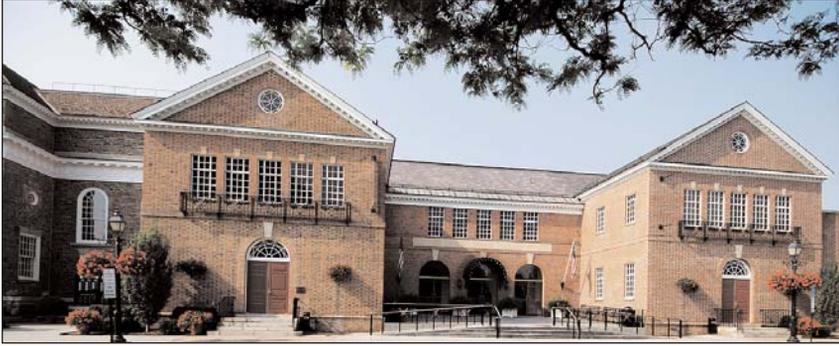
COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. – “They started something here, and the kids are keeping the ball rolling. I hope some of you kids will be in the Hall of Fame. I’m very glad that in my day I was able to earn my place. And I hope youngsters of today have the same opportunity to experience such feeling.”

So said Babe Ruth on the afternoon of June 12, 1939,

when the first formal induction was held at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. The Babe and the other 10 inductees who were present that memorable day would probably be stunned to see how much the famous museum in Cooperstown has changed in more than 70 years since.

In its early years, the Hall of Fame was little more than a one-room collection of donated artifacts, beginning with a pair of Ruth’s cleats, a uniform worn by Ty Cobb, a baseball from Cy Young’s 500th career victory in 1910 and a glove that had been used by Christy Mathewson.

Today, the Hall of Fame’s collections contain more than 38,000 three-dimensional artifacts – such as bats, balls, gloves and uniforms – donated by players and fans who want to see history preserved. The Museum’s curators use the artifacts – whose number grows by about 400 each year – to tell the story of the national pastime through exhibits.



The Museum’s Library is also home to three million books and documents, 130,000 baseball cards and 500,000 photographs. The not-for-profit institution focuses on education through its mission to honor excellence, preserve history and connect generations.

The Museum consists of three floors of exhibits, including the oak-lined walls of the Hall of Fame Plaque Gallery – home to the bronze plaques of the game’s greatest players, managers, umpires and executives. With 295 members, including 205 former major league players, only one percent of those to have played baseball in the major leagues have earned a spot in the Hall of Fame.

A few exhibits that are visitor favorites include: The Babe Ruth Exhibit, which chronicles the career of baseball’s first bigger-than-life superstar; Diamond Dreams, which details the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League of the 1940s and 50s; ¡Viva Baseball!, which celebrates the contributions of Latin Americans to America’s game; and Pride and Passion, which honors the dedication and skill of African-American players and executives.

The Museum holds public programming for visitors throughout the year, but two of the biggest events are Hall of Fame Weekend and Hall of Fame Classic Weekend.

Fans from all over the country and the world flock to Cooperstown at the end of July to witness as around 50 Hall of Famers return to the home of baseball to welcome the newest inductees during Hall of Fame Weekend. In 2011, second baseman Roberto Alomar, pitcher Bert Blyleven and baseball executive Pat Gillick will be presented with their bronze plaques at the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in front of thousands of fans.

A newer tradition, the Hall of Fame Classic, is a legends game that features Hall of Famers and former major league stars playing baseball on Doubleday Field on Father’s Day. Families come to watch their heroes swing a bat and maybe even get an autograph.

“This little village is where baseball lives,” said Hall of Famer Phil Niekro. “There’s nothing like coming back to Cooperstown.”



Photos: Milo Stewart Jr./National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. For more information about the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum go online to <http://baseballhall.org>. This is one of a series written for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2011.