

A View Through History  
By Kyle Schiller Barrett

### Homer Peel: From Yoe High to the World Series

With the 2023 World Series on the minds of many Texans, it is interesting to research just how many players in Major League Baseball's past and present were natives of The Lone Star State. Happily, for those of us who are baseball fans, the 2023 World Series has been played partially in the State of Texas this year.

This simple fact automatically becomes Texas history where baseball fanatics and trivia buffs are concerned. It means that for the eighth time in our history a team from Texas gets to host some of the games in the World Series. This all happened because the Texas Rangers won the American League Championship over the Houston Astros. This in turn put the Rangers, the baseball team not the legendary lawmen, in the 2023 World Series against the Arizona Diamondbacks, the baseball team not the venomous rattlesnakes.

Throughout the history of Major League Baseball many young men from big cities and small towns have played in the Fall Classic known as the World Series. The early days of MLB saw mostly American born men on the teams, but in the modern games many countries are now represented on the roster. Dating back from the early 1900's, some of these Major League Players have gone to large Universities and some signed on to play fresh out of high school. However, did you know that one of these Major League Baseball Players attended our own C.H. Yoe High School in Cameron, Texas?

Homer Hefner Peel attended Cameron's Yoe High School in the 1920's. He and his brother Everett Peel both played baseball for the school. Their parents were James Archie Peel Jr. and Lena Maud Hefner Peel of Port Sullivan, Texas on the Brazos River. The Peel's had five children and raised them on a cotton farm in northeastern Milam County. The Peel family was rooted in our county's history as Homer's grandfather, James Archie Peel, Sr., was a cotton merchant and one of the early pioneers of Port Sullivan. Today, Port Sullivan is little more than a ghost town; a community with a cemetery and historical marker on County Road 259-260 off of FM 485.

On October 10, 1902, Homer Peel was born in Port Sullivan. He would come from a small place with humble beginnings, but he would achieve fame on the baseball diamond starting in 1923. It was then that Peel began playing minor league baseball for a long list of teams, and some were in the Texas League. But his big break in the Majors came on September 13, 1927, when he began playing for St. Louis at age 24. In his career, Homer would play professional baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals (1924-1927), the Philadelphia Phillies (1929) and the New York Giants (1933-1934). Yes, the Giants started out in New York, not San Francisco.

Peel was a right-handed batter, and he also threw right-handed. Even though he had played catcher at old Yoe High School, he switched to outfielder while in the minor leagues. In his MLB career, Peel had a batting average of .238 and had 44 RBIs with two homeruns credited to his stats.

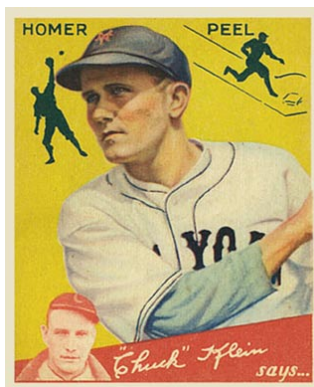
In 1933, the New York Giants won the World Series defeating the Washington Senators four games to one. Homer Peel and fellow Milam County native Jo-Jo Moore were teammates on the Giants' Championship Team in 1933. During Peel's baseball career he was given the nickname "The Ty Cobb of the Texas League," because in the minor leagues his .325 batting average mimicked that of the more famous Cobb. Still the Milam County native and Yoe grad, Homer Peel made his mark on the 1933 World Series. He played centerfield and had a single as a pinch hitter in the 1933 World Series. Not bad for a kid from the cottonfields of Port Sullivan, Texas.

When Peel ended his MLB playing days in 1934, he became a baseball manager for several farm league teams in the Texas Circuit, such as the Fort Worth Cats, Oklahoma Indians, and the Shreveport Sports. He worked as a manager from the mid-1930's to the mid-1940's. However, after World War II broke out, baseball was not Homer Peel's only career in the 1940's.

In 1943, Peel enlisted in the U. S. Navy as part of the military's Gene Tunney Program. This program was established so that professional athletes could join the war effort as officers and serve as recreation specialists for soldiers and sailors. Homer was first sent to the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Virginia, where he coached the baseball team. The Navy would eventually send Peel to the South Pacific where he was the recreation director on the island of New Caledonia.

After World War II, Homer Peel would return to managing minor league baseball until 1950. He had married Julia Smart in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1945. They made their home in that city where Homer would become a successful businessman and father. After a long-life and long career in baseball, Homer Peel passed away on April 8, 1997, at age 94. Homer Peel was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in 1982. His many accomplishments and awards in baseball have made this former Yoemen and Milam Countian an interesting part of the history surrounding the "Great American Pastime"...Baseball.

As part of its collection of sports memorabilia, the Milam County Historical Museum highlights athletes from the early days of professional sports and that once called Milam County home. The stories of Homer Peel, known as the "Ty Cobb of the Texas League" and Joe Moore, known as the "Gause Ghost" are only one part of the displays in the Milam County Historical Museum. Come by for a visit. The Main Museum is located at 112 W. First Street or the Old Jail Museum is found at 201 E. Main Street in downtown Cameron. Museum hours are Thursday through Saturday from 10:00am to 3:00pm, or by appointment on other days.



Homer Peel 1933 New York Giants Baseball Card