



ISSN: 2471-6839

PANORAMA

Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art

Marmorean Ballplayer:

Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence

Paul H. D. Kaplan

Professor of Art History

State University of New York, Purchase

Brooklyn and baseball have a long-standing and intimate connection. The brash new city and the sport both grew exponentially in the middle of the nineteenth century. Brooklyn became one of the chief centers of the “national pastime,” and this strong affiliation persisted until the shocking departure of the Dodgers in 1958. The reputation of the city as a nurturing environment for art and artists took a little longer to develop. Shortly before Brooklyn ceased to be an independent municipality (becoming a borough of New York City in 1898), an ambitious civic art museum was founded there, and Brooklyn’s distinguished record in the visual arts is currently manifested by, among other things, the flourishing presence of artists and galleries in Dumbo, Williamsburg, and Bushwick. But if both sports and the visual arts are now well accepted as elements of Brooklyn’s identity, they are rarely conceived as elements related to one another. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, however, both baseball and sculpture could serve as markers and conduits for ascending class and cultural identity, and the remarkable career of John McNamee (c. 1827–1895) brings these two realms together in an unfamiliar but revealing fashion. Part of what connected sport to art in the case of McNamee was his engagement in Brooklyn politics, and this essay will trace a trajectory in his life from baseball to elective office to sculpture, and finally back to baseball. The bust that McNamee produced of

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Brooklyn mayor Martin Kalbfleisch in 1877, still in Brooklyn Borough Hall—and his unfinished and lost project for a marble statue of a first baseman, from the 1870s—which is gone, but well-recorded in textual descriptions—are the key objects in this account. In retrospect, each of these works evokes a central aspect of McNamee's public life before his permanent immigration to Florence in 1870, and they were both made in that Italian city. As is so often true of American travelers of the nineteenth century, McNamee's European expatriation sharpened his consciousness of his American identity. Indeed, as with some other expatriate American artists, there is no record of his producing any work for Italian patrons, or even with an explicitly Italian theme.

McNamee's complex path to a late in life sculptural career is certainly singular, but several further aspects of his case resonate with the work and experience of other American artists of this era. As for his artistic interest in sport, there are parallels in the career of Thomas Eakins (1844–1916). Eakins made a watercolor sketch of baseball players practicing in 1875, although he did not follow up with a finished painting devoted to this theme.¹ More importantly, in 1871 and 1872, right around the time when McNamee began his statue of a baseball player, Eakins began to depict recreational and competitive male rowers in sculls on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia.² In these rowing images, Eakins, like McNamee, depicted a sport he himself engaged in, although unlike McNamee, Eakins' competitive athletic skills were modest and not a significant part of his public profile. As for his ethnic identity, McNamee's Irish Catholic background was unusual for an American working in the elevated medium of marble sculpture, but it is also true that compared with the usually narrow academic screening procedures that regulated the flow of French artists into Italy, for example, the United States was notable for the diversity of its expatriate artists in this period. The well-known sculptor Edmonia Lewis (1844–1907), of black and Native American descent, had actually been preceded by another African American, the lesser-known Eugène Warburg, a native of New Orleans who had been born enslaved.³ Warburg, although of partly Jewish ancestry, was a Catholic from birth, and

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Lewis joined the papal church while in Italy. Besides Lewis, there were of course many other notable American women, including the famous Harriet Hosmer (1830–1908), working as sculptors in Rome in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴

For figures such as Hosmer, a considerably body of work and documentation survives, but with some of these expatriates the paper trail and surviving oeuvre is quite slender, especially if (like McNamee) they never returned to the United States. One of the significant sources of information for these artists are the hundreds of contemporary travel memoirs published by American travelers to Europe, who regarded visits to the studios of American artists in Rome and Florence as crucial to the sophisticated tourist experience.⁵ The expatriate artists, of course, were eager for patronage and the exposure back home that such visits would promote. Some of these memoirs were first published in installments in newspapers and periodicals; in many other cases, arts journalism, both abroad and at home and often quite detailed, was never converted into book form. Today, the increasingly rapid digitization of an ever wider array of nineteenth-century American newspapers and periodicals is an essential tool for this study, and, I would suggest, for almost any comprehensive attempt to unravel the details of artist careers in this era. The digitized sources provide much more than information about the reception of artworks, although they are often extremely rich in that regard, as will become evident. For instance, in the case of McNamee, even the artist's first name

could only be found via a digital search, and many of his works (although not his *First Base*) are mentioned only in a series of articles over a number of years in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* is a particularly crucial resource for McNamee, because he had political links to the paper and its publisher; the newspaper may have been as essential to his career as it is to this reconstruction of it.

There are, naturally, challenges in relying so much on digitized journalism. The greatest of these at the moment is surely the as yet incomplete, but soon to be more complete, character of the digital archive of nineteenth-century American newspapers. Any scholar using these sources must be prepared for the

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

inevitable appearance of further data soon after publication, although at least in McNamee's case, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, almost certainly the most valuable source for him, is already fully available.⁶ Another significant defect is the funnel vision that all digital searches tend to create. That is, in being directed to a name or other keyword, the source in question is rapidly plundered, and the broader context of the newspaper's range of coverage and political orientation in particular may be ignored. The promotional objective in many newspaper articles about artists (then and now) must be kept in mind. This leads to the acknowledgment that the rave reviews of McNamee's work cited below must be taken with a grain of salt. His active career lasted only about a decade, and after his death in 1895, his reputation quickly faded. Nevertheless, his bust of a Brooklyn mayor prompted a significant and revealing dispute about civic patronage; and his work, *First Base*, was innovative and forward-looking in its subject matter, and recasts the early history of images of America's most distinctive sport.

One further methodological comment is required. McNamee's *First Base* was never fully completed, and existed only as a sequence of two clay studies before the accidental destruction (evidently of the latter model) in the early 1880s. Although the second model was photographed, that visual record was never published and is unknown today. Nonetheless, the surviving textual descriptions enable us to create a relatively accurate mental picture of the work, which in turn allows for connections to other baseball images and other major sculpture. The study of lost works has a long history in the tradition of art history.⁷ It is with this tradition in mind that I have pursued McNamee's ball-player.

Reconstructing a Biography

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

My introduction to McNamee came in a generally bland and predictable memoir about an 1875 trip to Europe by Horatio King (1811–1897), a Washington attorney who was a relatively minor figure in the Democratic Party, where the following passage appears:

We have been to McNamee's studio, a sculptor from Brooklyn, N.Y., to see his model, not yet completed, of his "Base Ball Player," on which he said he had been engaged for four years. His living model was present and took the attitude being represented, that we might compare the one with the other. The model's right foot on tip toe is at the base, while his left, with the body, is stretched forward and arms extend to the utmost point—both hands ready to catch the ball—and head turned toward his left shoulder, looking with intense eagerness as if to follow the direction of the ball. It is a singular fact that this living model, an Italian of twenty-five or thirty years of age, from having been rather a frail young man when he first stood for Mr. McNamee, has by this exercise become powerfully muscular, and his left thigh, from the greater strain upon it, has increased in size three inches more than his right. Mr. McNamee has just completed a beautiful bust in marble of Miss Kinsley, of Brooklyn.⁸

A thorough examination of histories and dictionaries of nineteenth-century American art, including those focused both on expatriates and artists from Brooklyn and the New York metropolitan area, provides not the slightest trace of information about McNamee.⁹ But he was a person of some note in his own day, and his life and work can be traced.

John McNamee was born in Brooklyn in 1827 or 1828, the son of two Irish immigrants, John McNamee and Catharine Pettit, who had reached the United States in about 1818. His older brother Michael, who went on to become the keeper of the most distinguished saloon for Brooklyn politicians, had been born in Ireland in 1815. There were other siblings as well, including Thomas, born about 1832, who in later years

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

lived with his brother John. Their father John died in 1833.¹⁰ All that is known of the younger John's early working life is that he was apprenticed to a stonemason, and entered that trade. But he did not make a full career as a stoneworker, although he is said to have worked on mantels and tombstones, and to have been employed in building the Charleston, South Carolina Customs House (begun 1853).¹¹ By 1856, he begins to turn up frequently in accounts of Brooklyn political life, as a Democratic alderman from the second ward.¹² Brooklyn was then in the midst of stunningly rapid growth from town to megacity, and the Democratic Party, usually ascendant in local contests, was increasingly dominated by Irish-American Catholics.¹³ By 1860, John McNamee was a man of substance, who owned real estate worth \$1800 and had additional assets of \$1800.¹⁴ In the fall of that year, he ran for the important post of sheriff of Kings County, although as a result of a split within the Democratic Party, he was not elected.¹⁵ The 1860 census indicates his profession as "rectifier," which is to say, a distiller, a business he may well have entered with the help of his prosperous, saloonkeeping brother.¹⁶ Men such as John and Michael McNamee, having risen from the working class to become business owners with important political connections, were in fact the most influential leaders in Irish-American neighborhoods in this period.¹⁷

In 1863, having established an understanding with the Brooklyn Irish Catholic Democratic "boss" Hugh McLaughlin, McNamee again ran for sheriff, and was elected with the support of both regular and reform Democrats.¹⁸ His name appeared at the top of the Kings County ticket, and he seems to have carried out his duties to general satisfaction over his four-year term. In business directories of the period, he continued to describe himself as a distiller and also as an engineer, with a place of business near the waterfront in what is now Dumbo.¹⁹ For a time, his brother Thomas is described as the assistant keeper of the Kings County jail, and both John and Thomas appear to have lived in part of the jail building.²⁰ With distilling, selling liquor, arresting miscreants, and keeping the jail, the family as a whole found a comfortable and sustainable niche in Brooklyn life. John also served from 1867 to 1869 as a member of the board of the Kings County Inebriates' Home.²¹ It could be said that John McNamee and his brothers Michael and Thomas

prospered as a result of their vertical integration of various parts of the alcohol business and its social consequences.

John McNamee married Jennie Dougherty of Newark in February of 1866, but he did not run for reelection as sheriff in the fall of 1867.²² Toward the end of the 1860s, he seems to have met some reverses in business, and by 1871, he no longer appears in the Brooklyn City Directory.²³ In fact, he had decided upon a significant change of course—to become a professional sculptor. At the time, this kind of mid-life switch in the arts, was unfamiliar to Americans. Indeed, some of his contemporaries evidently felt he had gone off the deep end. “Many there were,” wrote a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, “who thought they saw in it [McNamee’s sudden turn to the arts] the evidence of a phantasy [*sic*] or a weakness which was more than pathetic than diverting, and denoted not so much a breaking up of marble as of faculties.”²⁴ There was a transitional period in the late 1860s during which he executed several busts, first of his own wife (in marble) and then one in plaster of Maria Pray (1828–1911), a noted actress and the wife of the equally famous Irish-born American actor and entertainer Bernard Flaherty, known professionally as Barney Williams.²⁵ Neither of these works seems to have survived.

In 1870, McNamee and his wife Jennie (who were childless) pulled up roots and left for Italy, intending to make a career there as an expatriate sculptor. They soon settled in Florence. By October of 1872, his studio was located at via Venezia, 10, in a peripheral neighborhood north of the historical city center but still within the walls.²⁶ Rome had attracted the largest number of American sculptors, although since the arrival of Horatio Greenough in 1828, Florence had had its own expatriate sculptor community, and the political turmoil in Rome in 1870 (with the French unsuccessfully defending the papal city against the forces of the Risorgimento) must have made Florence look more promising.²⁷ Florence had become the capital of a newly independent Italy in 1865, and its anglophone community was large and full of celebrities.²⁸ The McNamees in fact eventually moved into a property associated with such a celebrity—a sprawling house in the outlying Piazza Indipendenza that had been inhabited until 1865 by the well-known English writer

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Frances (Fanny) Trollope (1779–1863) and her literary son, Thomas Adolphus.²⁹ (These Trollopes were mother and brother to the novelist Anthony Trollope.)

Throughout the 1870s, John McNamee worked as a sculptor. It is not known whether he studied with other American or Italian artists. One newspaper account describes him as entirely self-taught, and claims that his work was admired by the academically-trained American expatriate sculptors Hiram Powers, Thomas Ball, and Joel Tanner Hart.³⁰ His output consisted largely of portrait busts, in addition to the baseball player. Several of the subjects of his busts appear to have been Brooklynites, including Judge Advocate General James B. Craig (an important member of the Brooklyn Democratic Party) and his daughter Mary.³¹ The “Miss Kinsley” in King’s account cited above was Mary Craig’s close friend Annie Kingsley, the daughter of William Kingsley, a Brooklyn contractor and Democrat who was the leading promoter of the Brooklyn Bridge.³² Both Craig and Kingsley were in the circle of Boss McLaughlin, and Kingsley was one of the owners

of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which surely accounts for the frequent appearance of McNamee’s name in its pages during the 1870s.³³ There is also mention of busts of the musician and brass band leader D. C. Hall (1822–1900),³⁴ and the opera singer Jules Perkins.³⁵ None of these works are identifiable today, although a bust of an unknown mature, bearded, and balding man, signed by McNamee (fig. 1), recently surfaced on the web.³⁶ At the death of the aforementioned actor and entertainer Barney Williams (1824–1876), McNamee executed a marble bust (fig. 2) for the deceased’s grand funerary monument (fig. 3) in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Shortly after its installation on December 6, 1878, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wrote of the bust that



Fig. 1. John McNamee, bust (subject unknown). Marble, life size (?). Location unknown. Photo: author.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

“there is no superior piece of art in Greenwood, and Mr. McNamee’s friends might rest his claims as a great artist, upon this alone.” The monument still stands, but the bust is a ruin, the details worn by weather and the

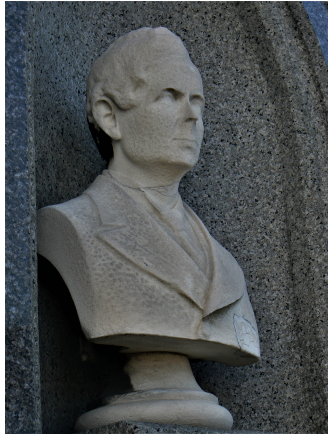


Fig. 2. John McNamee, bust of Barney Williams, 1878. Marble, life size. Tomb of Barney Williams, Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

face clearly having split into several pieces, which have been crudely rejoined.³⁷

Few American sculptors of the period shared McNamee’s ethnicity, and it is also worth observing that while his Catholic religion must have made settling in Italy easier in some respects, his faith may also have been an obstacle in establishing close relations with the community of American expatriate artists in Florence. One significant feature of the Barney Williams

monument is that Williams, like McNamee, had Irish Catholic roots. The contribution of Irish-American Catholics to nineteenth-century art has yet to be systematically explored, but McNamee was not alone. John Brouwere

(1790–1834), who produced life mask portraits, was probably the first significant figure.³⁸ During the era of McNamee’s career, the two most notable Irish-American sculptors were James W. A. MacDonald (1822–1908) and Robert Cushing (1841–1896). MacDonald had started out in St. Louis, but by 1865, his studio was in New York City and in 1871, he completed a bronze bust of Washington Irving for Prospect Park in Brooklyn.³⁹ Cushing, a student of John Quincy Adams Ward (1830–1910), also worked primarily in bronze. He was born in Ireland, and



Fig. 3. John McNamee, tomb of Barney Williams, 1878. Granite and marble, approx. 10’ high. Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

spent time in Rome, but his later career was in New York, where he produced several monuments with Catholic subjects.⁴⁰ Among painters the most salient figures were John Mulvaney and George P. A. Healy.

Mulvaney (1839–1906) spent some time in Northern Europe after the Civil War, and one aspect of his career makes for an interesting parallel with McNamee's: both men had enterprising saloonkeeper brothers.⁴¹ Healy (1813–1894), the best-known and most successful of all this group, was the son of a sea captain, and he achieved distinction as a portraitist, employed by members of the American and European elites. Although he grew up in Boston, he passed much of his later career in European capitals. Healy was in Italy between 1867 and 1872, and he the only Irish-American visual artist known to have been in touch with McNamee; they most probably met in Rome (where Healy made a portrait of Pope Pius IX) or Florence.⁴² From the point of view of religion, Irish-American Catholic artists like McNamee, Cushing and Healy would have found Italy particularly congenial, but McNamee's faith may also have been an obstacle in establishing close relations with the overwhelmingly Protestant community of American expatriate artists in Florence.

Of the works McNamee executed during the 1870s in Florence, two stand out for their high profile in the newspaper coverage of his career. Each represented a character that McNamee had played in his earlier life—a politician and a baseball player.

The Bust of Mayor Kalbfleisch

In 1877, McNamee completed a posthumous portrait bust of the three-time mayor of Brooklyn, Martin Kalbfleisch (1804-1873) [fig.4.]. It is a polished, professional piece, of a common type in this era. Its distinction and interest for us today lie in its controversial reception, which constitutes another chapter in the



Fig. 4. John McNamee, bust of Martin Kalbfleisch, 1877. Marble, life size. Brooklyn Borough Hall, Brooklyn, NY. Photo:

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

long history of American discomfort with public portrait statuary. To make full sense of the dispute over the bust, the prior history of sculpture in Brooklyn will also be discussed in this section.

Kalbfleisch was a crusty and capricious Democrat who, like McNamee, had uneven relations with Boss McLaughlin.⁴³ Kalbfleisch had been mayor during part of McNamee's term as sheriff, and they surely knew each other well. It was traditional to commission painted portraits of Brooklyn mayors, but for those who were elected to more than non-contiguous term, like Kalbfleisch (1862 to 1864 and 1867 to 1871), a new convention was gradually being established: the second term was to be memorialized with a sculpted bust. McNamee must have seemed just the man for this project, but it was not completed without controversy. An article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on January 3, 1878, indicates that McNamee had finished such a bust on his own initiative, and was hoping the city authorities would spring for it.

The usage is to have not only a portrait of each Mayor, but to provide for the portrait of each one, at the expiration of his term, whether he be a re-elected Chief Magistrate or not. Ex-Mayor Powell, the only other Mayor who occupied the office as often as Mr. Kalbfleisch did, is represented not only by a portrait but by a bust. Mr. Kalbfleisch himself, we believe, prevented a second portrait of himself being taken – in one of his more economical moments.⁴⁴

The article, "About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men," suggested that a McNamee bust of Kalbfleisch would fittingly connect the two former Brooklyn Democratic stalwarts, but acknowledged an earlier skepticism about McNamee's turn to high art. Nevertheless, the reporter concluded, McNamee had made "sure but not phenomenal progress," and if the good reports of the bust were true, then the city ought to acquire it. On January 7, another and lengthier appreciation of McNamee's work appeared, which also announced that the bust had arrived in Brooklyn and would soon be put on display.⁴⁵ Significantly, the adjoining column of the same page of this day in the paper discussed the "shifting fortunes" of out-of-office politicians, and pointed out that while the position of sheriff was famous for the illicit wealth it could generate for those who occupied it, McNamee "went out of office in modest circumstances."⁴⁶ One detects a journalistic campaign

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

directed toward getting the city to buy the bust; Kingsley—the man already in the process of succeeding in that most legendary of sales jobs, selling the Brooklyn Bridge to the two cities it was to link—was very likely giving this smaller project its essential push.

Some push was necessary, because the sprawling and brawling new city of Brooklyn, which was incorporated in 1834, had only an intermittent tradition of civic art. Some artists had begun to move there from Manhattan for its more reasonable rents, but there was not much of a cohesive arts community. The Brooklyn Art Association was formed in 1860, but its occasional exhibitions generally included only paintings and prints.⁴⁷ The sculptor Henry Kirke Brown (1814–1886) had lived and worked in the city from 1848 to 1856, and his studio—which produced some of the first works in bronze in the United States—attracted a few other artists and intellectuals, probably including Walt Whitman.⁴⁸ Brown’s student, John Quincy Adams Ward (1830–1910), maintained his Brooklyn studio until 1860. During his Brooklyn years, Brown produced one major work erected in the city, his 1853 funerary monument for DeWitt Clinton (1769–1828). Clinton who had been a mayor of New York City and then governor of the state, had no real connection to Brooklyn, but the ambitious new “rural-style” Green-Wood cemetery, founded in 1838, had induced his family to rebury him there.⁴⁹ Indeed, the cemetery must have been a huge source of new work for Brooklyn stonemasons after 1838—by 1866, there were eighteen hundred monuments and many more headstones on its grounds—and it is not unlikely that McNamee had worked on projects for it in his youth.⁵⁰ While the Clinton monument had a civic dimension, most of the other graves focused on personal or sacred references, and those buried at Green-Wood were predominantly residents of Manhattan. About a decade after his departure to the Hudson Valley, Brown received another significant Brooklyn commission, a statue of Lincoln for Prospect Park that he completed in 1869. This sculpture, like a few busts by other sculptors for the new park produced in the 1870s, was not made in Brooklyn, and was privately donated.⁵¹

As for the work bankrolled by the city itself, Brooklyn’s temple-fronted City Hall was completed in 1848, but funds for figurative decoration were scarce. Painted portraits of the mayors were commissioned for

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

the Council Chambers, and civic sculpture seems to have debuted with an 1848 wooden figure of Justice crowning the top of the wooden cupola, both of which were destroyed by fire in 1895.⁵² In the austere interior, the earliest known work of sculpture was the bust of Mayor Samuel S. Powell, previously mentioned, but, as it turns out, this work was hardly a straightforward commission either. Powell, a Democrat like Kalbfleisch, held office from 1857 to 1860, and again from 1872 to 1873.⁵³ For nearly two months in the fall of 1872, the famous and controversial sculptor Vinnie Ream (1847–1914) was induced for a fee of \$1850 to occupy a booth at the Brooklyn Industrial Fair, where she worked afternoons and evenings modeling portraits in plaster.⁵⁴ For an extra fifty dollars a day, she agreed to work up a bust of Powell at his request, and after the fair closed, she completed it (without any further charges) in her permanent studio in Washington, DC, and shipped it to him. Powell already had in mind her rendering the bust in marble for public display, writing to her in July 1873 of his plan to put off his funding proposal to the Common Council until he was on the verge of leaving office at the end of the year.⁵⁵ In late December, Powell deftly extracted an appropriation of \$1000 from the Council, which permitted Powell himself to choose the artist and to decide whether his likeness should be “on canvas or. . . chiseled in marble.”⁵⁶ Some delays in execution ensued, but by July 1875, the work was installed in the Common Council chamber over the president’s chair. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* tartly opined that it looked “more like Walter Scott than Sam Powell.”⁵⁷ The likeness does not conceal Powell’s relatively advanced age, but his lean and bony features are given dignity and a sense of probity reminiscent of contemporary portraits of Lincoln, and perhaps of the “veristic” portraiture of Republican and early Imperial Rome that Ream would have come into contact with during her year-long stay in Rome in 1869 to 1870. Oddly, the finished bust is unsigned, and by 1909, the name of the sculptor was no longer attached to the work.⁵⁸

Nor was Ream’s name ever cited in the coverage of the McNamee bust of Kalbfleisch of 1878 to 1879. As with the Ream bust of Powell, the plan to have McNamee’s likeness of Kalbfleisch bought by the city did not come to a head for over a year, and in this case, the marble bust had already been executed.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Kalbfleisch himself had died in 1873, so McNamee was the principal interested party, but being in Italy he had to rely on his old political friends. In April 1879, the Brooklyn Common Council engaged a raucous debate about whether the sculpture resembled Kalbfleisch, and whether the public fisc should really be in the business of paying for such things while so many of the working men of Brooklyn remained unemployed.

The account of this debate in the *Brooklyn Eagle* of April 22 is worth exploring. Although by then in the minority, two Democratic aldermen, William Dwyer and Thomas J. Kenna, promoted a motion to buy Kalbfleisch's bust for \$1500, soon reduced to \$1000 by an amendment from a Republican. Dwyer "eulogized" both McNamee and Kalbfleisch, and argued that the purchase was required by the "usages and necessities of civil government for all time; it is as necessary for the future well being of our city as the levying of the most important tax," an unusually strong claim for this period.⁵⁹

Three Republican aldermen were highly skeptical. "Honest John" French led the charge:

Now, according to the argument . . . it is only necessary for a Brooklyn man to present any work of art by bust or portrait of any gentleman who has served this city in the capacity of any officer, Mayor or Alderman, to have that matter presented to this Board, and acted upon, and ask the people's money to pay for it. . . . This is no time for pictures and busts. The people of Brooklyn are suffering, and these men in this lobby (pointing to the crown of unemployed laborers who composed the spectators) and throughout the city are seeking for employment and want something to do, sir, not to spend the people's money in the manner which is now proposed by a gentleman in Rome, or some other place in the wide world, I know not where, but because that gentleman happened to be born in Brooklyn, and did succeed in sculpting a bust and sent it to this city, now this Board of Aldermen, I suppose, are ready to vote a thousand dollars for this purpose. That's the argument. Pretty soon some other bust will be sent on by this gentleman, or some other gentleman, and out will be called upon again to vote away the people's money for this object.⁶⁰

Why, French asked, could not Kalbfleisch's family buy the bust and offer it to the city? (Private donations of this kind were, in fact, beginning to decorate the grounds of Prospect Park.⁶¹

Kenna replied to this populist-tinged critique with an appeal of his own to working-class solidarity: But when I first looked upon that bust of Martin Kalbfleisch and was told it was for sale; that it had been executed by John McNamee, a former workingman, of Brooklyn who by his own skill and talent had worked his way up to a position prominent among the people of Brooklyn and County of Kings, and who, after retiring from public life had gone to Italy and become a noted sculptor—I felt at once I could vote for the passage of that resolution. . . .⁶²



Fig. 5. John McNamee, detail of signature from bust of Martin Kalbfleisch, 1877. Marble, life size. Brooklyn Borough Hall, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

The sculptor's proletarian origins are used to deflate French's appeal for thrift on behalf of starving workers, and McNamee's "elevation" is here construed as a product of both his political and artistic careers. It should be emphasized that McNamee was described as a "former workingman," and he is held up here as an exemplar of rising status rather than as a representative

of the culture of the working class itself.

Two other Republicans continued the attack,

however. Joseph Hacker reported the rumor that

Kalbfleisch's family had first commissioned and then turned the work down as a poor likeness, and he declined "to help a poor politician out of a scrape. . . , a man who lives in Florence." William Fritz returned to French's more principled objection to the purchase:

I don't feel as if Brooklyn, in her present state of circumstances, have the right, or we have the right as representatives of the people, to establish an art gallery. It is establishing a precedent, I think,

gentlemen, that some day will lead farther, and I think that the people would wish that our heads had

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

been carved in stone ere we could come and vote away their money so unnecessarily. I can't face my people with a thousand dollars thrown away in this manner when men are starving and hungry for bread.⁶³

Nevertheless, the working men of Brooklyn ended up with Kalbfleisch instead of bread: the motion to acquire the bust for \$1000 passed down by a vote of fourteen to nine. The bust of Kalbfleisch, like that of Powell, is still displayed in Brooklyn City Hall (now Borough Hall), and bears the signature of McNamee and the date 1877 (fig. 5). Like the Powell bust, it was initially installed in a conspicuous position in the council chamber on a pedestal behind the chair of the council president, alongside many painted mayoral portraits (including one of Kalbfleisch that memorializes his first term in office). The two busts are recorded in several city administration inventories, but McNamee's has never been reproduced.⁶⁴ After the 1895 fire that damaged the council chamber, the two busts were moved elsewhere in the building; when I first visited Borough Hall in 2008, there was no official awareness of their presence, but I happened to spot them on a mezzanine opening onto the main lobby of the building.⁶⁵

Whereas the Ream bust of Powell has sharp and particular features and seems very much in the mode of late nineteenth-century American portraiture (fig. 6), McNamee's *Kalbfleisch* still has something of the neoclassical style that the sculptor must have learned in his early years as a marble in the 1840s—and which tended to prevail among the permanently expatriate sculptors in Rome and Florence well into



Fig. 6. Vinnie Ream, bust of Samuel Powell, 1874-75. Marble, life size. Brooklyn Borough Hall, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

the 1870s. Although shown in modern dress, Kalbfleisch has an immobile, stoic expression that contrasts with his more affable appearance in the portrait painted by Junius Brutus Stearns of 1864 (fig. 7).⁶⁶ The bust

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

suggests a resemblance to the canonical portraits of Thomas Jefferson, with his broad face and tight mouth, and such a similarity would have appealed to any Democratic politician. The bust is figuratively and literally highly polished, and suggests a fully professional level of competency. But, if not for the unusual background of its maker, its enduring presence in Borough Hall and the revealing debate around its purchase, it would hardly provoke greater curiosity.



Fig. 7. Junius Brutus Stearns, portrait of Martin Kalbfleisch, 1864. Oil on canvas, 42" x 24". Brooklyn Borough Hall Council Chamber, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

First Base

On the other hand, McNamee's principal sculptural project, the *Baseball Player* or *First Base*, was a bold and unconventional undertaking, and

ahead of its time. Beyond reconstructing its appearance and reception, the ensuing discussion aims to interpret the work in terms of McNamee's own personal and social identity, and to understand its significant position as an anomalously high art effort within the early unfolding of baseball imagery.

Besides the valuable description of Horatio King, cited earlier in this essay, ten other references to it have been located, of which six are in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.⁶⁷ The earliest of these dates to March 30, 1872, and is found in a now forgotten (and not yet digitized) American weekly newspaper published in Paris and London, *The American Register*, and is worth quoting in full:

Fine Art Critics who have seen the model of John McNamee's last work in Florence, speak of it in terms of unqualified admiration. It will be remembered that the artist was formerly sheriff of King's County, Long Island, and abandoned public life to devote himself to art. His statue, to which we make allusion, represents one of the nine players in the celebrated American game of Base Ball. Mr.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

McNamee has selected the moment when in a very close contest the ball is thrown by the man in the field to the man at first base. This latter, in his eagerness to catch the ball, throws himself forward on his left foot, the toe of the right still touching the base. In accordance with the rule of the game, both arms are extended and the hands are outstretched to meet the ball. So active and agile does the figure appear that the spectator almost expects to see it spring back into its erect position, in which it would measure about six feet three inches in height. The spirit of this admirable work reminds one of the fighting Gladiator, but, in “the First Base,” the close position of the arms renders the modelling of the latter even more difficult of execution.⁶⁸

This was followed nearly a year later by a briefer passage on McNamee in the *New York Herald*:

Most of our readers will remember the name of this gentleman, who was recently Sheriff of Kings County. He has lately attained success in Italy as a sculptor. Two years ago he went thither and began the elaboration of a design which he called ‘The First Base.’ It is a nude figure of a young American athlete springing to catch the ball.⁶⁹

The *Brooklyn Eagle* soon followed up, on March 6, 1873, with the affirmation that the baseball figure was McNamee’s first work, and emphasized the nudity of both the statue and the model who was posing for it.⁷⁰

The unusual choice of subject was attributed to McNamee’s having been a “noted base ball player” back in Brooklyn. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* also provided another clear description of the work’s form: “The figure is posed upon the left foot with the right touching the base, and the body bent forward with every muscle straining to the utmost tension in anticipation of the coming ball.”⁷¹ The *New York Herald* observed that McNamee’s first baseman had already been lauded by the portrait painter George P. A. Healy, who as we have seen was perhaps the most successful of Irish-American artists in this era, and also claimed that the city of Florence had arranged to have the work shown at the International Exposition (Weltausstellung) of 1873 in Vienna, although there is no evidence the sculpture was actually exhibited there.⁷²

On August 16, 1875, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published a letter from the Brooklyn Democratic Alderman Jacob I. Bergen, who had visited McNamee's studio on July 22. There he saw the busts of Misses Craig and Kingsley (among others), a group entitled "Faith, Hope and Charity," in the works for the Brooklynite Felix Campbell (1829–1902), a manufacturer, banker, and Democratic congressman between 1883 and 1891, and the baseball sculpture, still only in clay.⁷³ A much more expansive discussion appeared in January 1876 in the Brooklyn newspaper, which is essentially a letter by John Clark (1841–1906), an Irish-American *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* journalist and talented singer, whose newspaper colleagues had raised enough money to send him off to Milan for voice training; that training led to an international career in light opera, during which he was known as "Signor Brocolini" [Brooklyn].⁷⁴ Clark's letter, like the praise of Healy cited above, further reinforces the importance of an Irish-American network for McNamee's career. Clark describes McNamee as "bedaubed with clay and busy with the busts of some Brooklynites," including Misses Craig and Kingsley, James B. Craig, and Jules Perkins. But he devotes the most attention to *First Base* and with good personal reason, since Clark himself had been an avid baseball player and fan during several years in Detroit just after the Civil War, and first base was in fact his position:

The First Baseman is an original idea, which he is still studying upon. The figure is life size and represents the first baseman in the act of making "the winning catch" in a remarkably close and exciting base ball match. The toes of the right foot touch the base bag, the player is leaning forward as far as possible, the right leg being straight, the body sloping out and upward in a line with that leg, while the left leg is bent at the knee at about a right angle. The arms and hands are thrown out, the latter in the position required to grasp the ball. The pose of the figure is perfect, and the work when complete will no doubt do credit to the genius who created it.

"If I remember rightly, you were a base ball player?" I said to Mr. McNamee.

"I was—some—" he replied. "Why," said he, "I suppose I might say I was one of the originators of the game."⁷⁵

Here McNamee began to reminisce about his early pick-up games on York Street (perhaps in the late 1840s), in which the old practice of throwing the ball at a runner to get him out was still permitted. A little while later, he recounted, real teams began to form, including one of the most famous early Brooklyn teams, the Atlantics, though McNamee instead “helped to organize the Pastimes—the City Hall Club, as it was called.” When the Pastimes broke up, McNamee did join the Atlantics club, but as a paying member rather than as a player. The rest of Clark’s conversation with McNamee delved into Brooklyn politics, which the sculptor still followed, and his evaluations of Boss McLaughlin and William Kingsley. The chat concluded, Clark went off with McNamee and his wife to a production of Bellini’s *Norma*.

In the decades after baseball entered a semi-professional and then fully professional phase in the late 1850s to early 1870s, exaggerated claims of who invented or shaped the game began to be made—the most famous of these is Albert Spalding’s promotion of Abner Doubleday as the inventor of the sport.⁷⁶ One might wonder whether McNamee was not gilding the lily in his reminiscence of events already many years in the past. Fortunately, newspaper records including box scores survive from the 1850s, and they show that John McNamee was indeed a notable early player. He was an outfielder on the Pastime team in 1858 and 1859, lauded both for his hitting and his fielding; the first baseman on the 1859 team, Brock Carroll, was evidently its best fielder, and perhaps the inspiration for the McNamee sculpture.⁷⁷ Henry Chadwick, the English-born journalist who did the most to codify the rules and record keeping of early organized baseball, was especially familiar with and charmed by the Pastimes, and in 1877, gave an extended account of an 1859 game in which McNamee played left field.⁷⁸ Looking back, Chadwick smiled at the memory of “ex-Sheriff McNamee, now carving out fame for himself as a sculptor in Florence, pitching or catching as though all life were a ball field and the only success worth anything that of securing a home run.”⁷⁹

Club play had begun in the early 1840s in the New York area, and the first New York City teams, entirely amateur, were mostly made up of gentlemen who were white collar workers. In Brooklyn the early players were mostly commonly skilled artisans; McNamee, of course, had begun in that class, although by the

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

late 1850s, he had risen beyond it.⁸⁰ Chadwick characterized the Pastimes as more gentlemanly and less avidly competitive than some of their adversaries; the more ambitious side of the Pastimes players, who were also known informally as the “City Hall Club,” was directed toward their political careers.⁸¹ In 1857, semi-professional play began, under the rubric of the National Association of Base Ball Players, an institution made fully official in 1858, when the Pastimes became one of the teams.⁸² In that sense, McNamee could indeed claim, if he helped to organize the team, that he was one of the originators of this newly codified and structured version of the game. In 1860 and 1861, the Pastimes are mentioned but seem to have lost their full affiliation with the association, and by 1862, they were gone.⁸³ The Atlantics had a longer and more successful run throughout the 1860s, and like the Pastimes, their members had the reputation of being Democrats.⁸⁴

To McNamee, the choice of a baseball player as the subject of his first major work would have seemed natural and virtually autobiographical. His past as player was not something that needed to be concealed, since baseball reflected his rise from artisan to gentleman and went hand in hand with his ascending political career. In an 1895 obituary of McNamee, a writer for the *New York Tribune* took care to pronounce him “devoted to high-class sports.”⁸⁵ Nor was the physicality and virile energy of the first baseman at odds with the still prevailing classical taste in Italy, which celebrated nude male athletes and handsome youthful divinities. As the January 3, 1878 article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* described it:

The subject [*First Base*] certainly is a fine one, admitting as it does of the representation of the most intense form of physical action under the most exciting circumstances, with a prescription rather than a license to body it forth in as perfect a specimen of athletic beauty as could be portrayed. The full manhood and early recreation of the sculptor himself come to the mind of any reader, on the mention of this his accredited masterpiece.⁸⁶

Without the work actually being a self-portrait, it confidently expressed McNamee’s masculine identities as both a sportsman and sculptor. Although his political career may have wound down, and his former business success been compromised, through art McNamee was able to revalidate his “full manhood” and the

respectable social status his early exploits had helped him to achieve.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the baseball subject also marked McNamee's American identity in a way that was often important to newly-arrived American artists in the Old World.⁸⁸

Four days later, and presumably from the same pen, another *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article appeared, containing further important details about *First Base*.

The subject was a bold one, and few of the older sculptors would care to handle it. His first model was amateurish, but strong and manly, and it showed the germs of so much excellence that he preserved with the work, and it is now ready for reproduction, in marble whenever an order for it may be given. It must not be inferred that McNamee's "First Base" of to-day represents the model executed five years ago. That one was the first study and answered its purpose in the clay, but the present model, although similar in action to the former, has been reconstructed from the beginning and represents Mr. McNamee's more mature thought and conscientious study. The finished model represents the player nude, with body thrown forward resting firmly on the right foot, and left foot thrown back and lightly touching the base. The arms are extended and hands poised to catch the expected ball. The pose is one of the most vigorous action. Every muscle is in play, and no one can look at the study without expressing admiration at its gracefulness. As



Fig. 8. Gilbert & Bacon, studio photo of George Pinckney, 1888 or earlier. Photograph, 7.5" x 5.5", The New York Public Library, Photography Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. Photo: NYPL Digital Collections.

we have already said, the model is nude, but if executed in marble it will be clothed in the usual tight fitting costume of the players of the National game. The work as it now exists reminds one of a study from the antique. The model is yet in Florence, but photographs of it are in Brooklyn and while they scarcely do the work justice, an idea of its strength may be obtained from them.⁸⁹

Those photographic images remain unknown, but a good general idea of the pose can be obtained from a stilted 1888 studio photograph of a Philadelphia ballplayer in the act of fielding a ball (fig. 8), although one presumes McNamee's figure was considerably more graceful and dramatic.⁹⁰



Fig. 9. Agasias, *Borghese Gladiator*, ca. 100 BCE. Marble, 1.99 m high. Louvre, Paris. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource.

This description makes it quite clear that McNamee produced a second version of the sculpture, since the earlier accounts of 1872, 1873, and 1875 had clearly noted that the right foot touched the base, whereas in the revised, late 1877 model, it is the left foot which does so. The reference to the antique is probably important here, as the best-known classical prototype for this kind of stretching pose is the work known as the *Borghese Gladiator* (fig. 9), in which the right leg is forward and bent, while the left is straight and extended backward, as in McNamee's second model.⁹¹ (Already in 1872 the *Gladiator* had been cited by a critic as comparable to McNamee's sculpture.⁹²) Only one arm of the *Gladiator* stretches forward, as opposed to the two in McNamee's work, but the head turns to the left as in one of the descriptions of McNamee's first model, and the

articulated muscles of its nude body may give some idea of "every muscle . . . in play" in the phrase cited above. The dramatic nudity of McNamee's model may have made it that much more difficult to obtain a

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

commission for rendering it in a permanent material. Although the writer indicates that the figure would be clothed in a uniform in its final form, the photographs must have shown only the nude model. Many potential American patrons would still have blanched at that nudity in the 1870s, while those who actually appreciated it would have perhaps been put off by the idea of cloaking it in sporting dress. The issues with Greenough's nude *Washington* and the broader debate about how to render modern dress in American statuary may still have vexed McNamee's project.⁹³

Those photographs of the second model have so far not surfaced, but they are probably the only chance to see this strange work, because there is no evidence the model was ever rendered in marble, and the 1895 McNamee obituary in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* asserts that "perhaps his most famous piece of work [*First Base*] . . . was destroyed through the carelessness of servants, who, in the absence of Mr. McNamee, cleaned his studio and ruined the result of ten years' hard and skillful work."⁹⁴ This account, provided by McNamee's Brooklyn friend and patron Felix Campbell, would date the destruction of the second model to about 1881. Campbell added that at the time of the work's destruction, "it was just about to be put into bronze."⁹⁵ This shift in the intended final medium makes sense, given the physical fragility of the reaching posture of the figure had it been rendered in marble. But one may wonder whether the work ever came close to being executed in either of those permanent materials.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the work clearly caught the fancy of visitors to McNamee's studio.

One final tribute to McNamee appeared a few days later on August 27, 1885, in a letter to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* by the former Brooklyn Fire Marshall (and friend of Boss McLaughlin) Benjamin Lewis.⁹⁷ Lewis had recently been to Florence, and extolled the comfort of the luxurious *pensione* that McNamee and his wife had operated for some time, known as the Villa or Hotel de Trollope. (To the modern ear this name has a rather salacious sound, but it did not disturb contemporaries.) McNamee took Lewis to see the Michelangelo *David*, a work the sculptor must also have studied in trying to conceive his own nude figure; from the baseball point of view, the *David* resembles a pitcher trying to intimidate ("stare down") a batter

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

before throwing his projectile towards him. McNamee's Florentine career as both sculptor and hotelier was rather narrowly oriented towards visitors from Brooklyn, and he knew how to entertain them. He pointed out to Lewis that the face of the majestic Renaissance statue had a "striking likeness" to Boss McLaughlin. McNamee's vision of the *David* therefore drew upon both the athletic and the political elements in his own experience and character.

McNamee and Early Baseball Sculpture

The Career of John McNamee is fascinating on its own terms, exemplifying the complexity of social and cultural networks that joined Ireland, Brooklyn, and Florence, as well as art, politics, transatlantic tourism, and the early years of professional sports. However, it is important to situate McNamee's *First Base* within the context of early images, and especially sculpture of baseball subjects. McNamee's project, begun about 1871, was evidently the first serious attempt to create a life-size figure of a player. But it had one notable predecessor in the way of a monumental baseball artwork, and there is another significant sculpture from the 1870s with a baseball theme that can help us to visualize McNamee's lost work.

Although individual athletic achievement had been a grand theme in ancient sculpture, from the medieval period well into the nineteenth century, hunting and horseracing were the preponderant forms of sport in the visual arts, reflecting their popularity among European and North American elites. In these works, animals instead of humans dominated and constituted the principal artistic challenge. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, images of prizefighting began to proliferate, especially in prints but ball sports were still rare subjects. The rise of team ball sports (cricket, rounders, baseball, and many variants and intermediate games) is a characteristic development of the 1800s. Broadly speaking, the trajectory was from rural settings, where the games were most often played by children, toward urban settings where the games were played by men, and were more carefully regulated and increasingly professionalized.⁹⁸ The earliest image of a baseball game is currently said to be a printed ticket of February 9, 1844, to the annual ball of the

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Magnolia Club, a gritty group made up largely of New York City lowlifes, although in the diminutive print, the game and its players (seen from a great distance as they pitch, bat, and run the bases) have a pastoral or a resort-like quality.⁹⁹ There is then a gap of a decade before other depictions appear.

Several sculptural works of the mid-1850s designed by the short-lived American artist Joseph Willson (also spelled Wilson) (c. 1825–57) represent figures playing ball, although it is far from certain that baseball in particular is the game.¹⁰⁰ Italy again plays a role in this imagery—Willson was studying in Rome between 1851 and 1854. An 1854 *New York Times* article devoted to the many American artists in Rome describes Willson’s studio as containing “a marble statue of Childhood, and . . . a fine statue of a boy engaged in playing ball, modeled in plaster.”¹⁰¹ By January 1856, Willson was working in a New York City studio, where another journalist noted a “fine plaster model of a boy, in the act of striking a ball with a bat,” and recorded the sculptor’s intent “to make a companion piece—a boy throwing the ball.”¹⁰² It is possible that the 1856 plaster



Fig. 10. Joseph Willson, reverse of Buchanan Indian Peace Medal, 1857. Silver, 6.2 cm diameter. ANS 1925.173.17, American Numismatic Society, New York. Photo: American Numismatic Society.

was identical to the 1854 one. Nothing is known today of these works, and the models may have been players of cricket or rounders or some other bat-and-ball game besides baseball. The focus on children is significant, and the 1856 plaster, at least, was apparently smaller than life size—perhaps a tabletop work. The contrast between the scale and the age of the subject in the work by Willson and the one by McNamee is instructive: between the early 1850s and the 1870s, baseball became a game for men instead of for children.

By 1857, Willson, working with his cousin Salathiel Ellis, had transformed his interest in the ballplaying motif into an element of a different kind of object: a silver

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

medallion commissioned by the United States Government of a type known as an Indian Peach Medal. This genre originated in the colonial period, and was maintained by Washington and his presidential successors. The medals were used as official gifts to Indian chiefs, especially those with whom treaties were being negotiated.¹⁰³ Because Willson and Ellis had already been commissioned to work on a peace medal from 1850 to 1853, it may be that Willson's ballplayer(s) in plaster were studies for a vignette he had in mind for a medal; but ballplaying does not appear on the peace medals the cousins executed until 1857. On the reverse of the smaller James Buchanan peace medal (fig. 10), Willson contrasted warlike images of Indians with weapons and engaged in scalping (in a peripheral band) with a central relief evoking the governmental ideal of the peaceful assimilation of Indians: an adult male in a feather headdress holds a plow drawn to a plow horse, while behind this neo-Jeffersonian image, four children play a bat and ball game which is observed by a girl in a dress, who may also be a player. One child bats, another seems to pitch, but no bases are shown. There is a more distant figure standing in the doorway of a settler's house, and further back appears a village flanked by a church with a tall steeple.¹⁰⁴

The imagery used by Willson significantly presents ballplaying as characteristic of American culture, and it may be no accident that the first claim that baseball was the “national Pastime” appears to date to 1856.¹⁰⁵

McNamee's team was in the “Pastimes,” which signified leisure, but by the late 1850s, perhaps also a kind of national identity. However, Willson's players are children and the setting is rustic; there is no implied



Fig. 11. Artist unknown, Funerary Monument of Jim Creighton, ca. 1862-66 or later. Stone, approx. 10' high. Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: author.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

relationship to the developing professionalization of the game. One of the messages may be that the violent aggression of Indian groups illustrated in the outer band is destined to be sublimated into the joyful game-playing of village life once peace is established; bow and arrow become transmuted into bat and ball. The leaders of the tribal delegations who received these gifts would have had no trouble interpreting the meanings of the plow and the church spire—although they may not have welcomed their import—but one can hardly imagine what they made of the small but puzzling detail of the ball game.

By 1862, when Willson's relief had been issued for the last time, the events leading to the earliest known monument incorporating baseball imagery had started. Jim Creighton of the Brooklyn Excelsior club was among the finer players who began to be paid for their efforts after 1857. Creighton's pitching was famous, but his powerful hitting was his undoing: he swung too hard at a pitch on October 14, 1862, and although he scored a home run, he ruptured an internal organ. Four days later he was dead, at the tender age of twenty-one. His teammates were so saddened by his untimely passing that they underwrote an impressive funerary monument that was eventually erected at what is still one of the most elegant American cemeteries, Brooklyn's vast and exquisitely landscaped Green-Wood

(fig.11).¹⁰⁶ Green-Wood is full of fine tombs, including that of Barney Williams with McNamee's now-ruinous bust, 1878 (fig. 3), but few of them contain anything like the richness of customized imagery that

Creighton's marble gravestone still displays. The slightly tapered pier does not contain an image of a player,

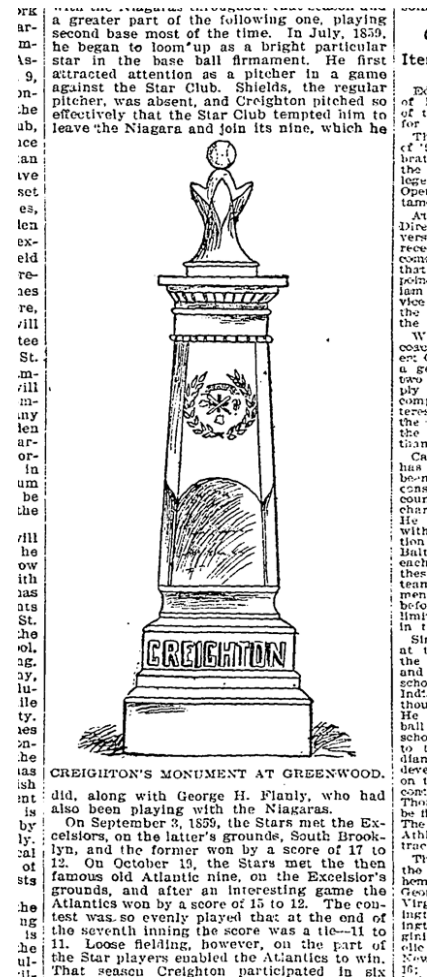


Fig. 12. Simplified sketch of Creighton Monument, from *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 6, 1898. 6" x 3". Photo: author.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

but nearly all of the considerable apparatus of the game makes an appearance. One element is now lost; an early drawing (fig. 12) and photograph (fig. 13) show that the pier once supported a slightly over-life-size seamed baseball at the very top.¹⁰⁷ Creighton's name appears on the uppermost part of the base of the pier.

At both the bottom and the top of the shaft of the pier there are friezes of little balls. At the corner of the shaft, what first appears to be colonnettes are revealed upon closer inspection to be baseball bats (very slender, as was standard at the time), with the handle up and the barrel pointed down. This is likely to be a reference to the classical motif of the inverted torch, commonly used in ancient funerary monuments. On the primary eastern face of the pier, a conventional tomb-slab inscribed with the full name of the deceased and those of his parents partly overlaps two of the bats. Above this section there is an elaborate wreath of oak and ivy leaves; traditional iconographic meanings for these include strength and loyalty (oak) and conviviality (ivy). Inside the wreath (fig. 14), there is a raised circular field on which the newly coined heraldry of baseball is displayed: two crossed bats, superimposed on either two rectangular bases or (more likely) an open scorebook.¹⁰⁸ Toward the bottom of the crossed bats, a baseball cap, a ball and a baseball shoe are scattered, along with a motif that is harder to read but may be a base or home plate. At the upper edge of the circular field is a scroll, which originally bore the word "excelsior" (ever upward)—the name of Creighton's team, but also an invocation of the young man's urge to push himself fearlessly to the highest level of

performance.¹⁰⁹ This harks back to Longfellow's immensely popular 1841 poem of the same name described a young man heading higher and higher toward a pass in the Alps, where he was soon found frozen to death, but still bore a banner with that word.¹¹⁰



Fig. 13. Early photo of Creighton Monument (see fig. 10), after Peter J. Nash, *Baseball Legends of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery*, 64. Photo: author.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.



Fig. 14. Detail of Creighton Monument (see fig. 10). Photo: author.

We do not know the name of the ingenious creator of Creighton's monument, and its date is a little uncertain. There is no doubt that the October 19, 1862 funeral of Creighton ended with his internment at this site, but the records of Green-Wood Cemetery cite the date of June 26, 1876 for the burial.¹¹¹ However, on July 5, 1866, the Excelsiors took the visiting Washington Nationals baseball club on a deluxe tour of Brooklyn, which included a stop at "Greenwood Cemetery [where] a silent tear was dropped to the memory of the lamented James Creighton, whose beautiful monument is a

prominent feature of the city of the dead."¹¹² The earliest known detailed description of the monument was published (with a drawing) (fig. 12) on February 6, 1898, in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.¹¹³ If the tomb was indeed completed by 1866, McNamee must have seen it.

The activities of the more organized clubs decreased during the last years of the Civil War, but the popularity of baseball spread among the Union troops, and the organized game bounced back vigorously once peace returned. Prints of the game and its players became more common. In September 1865, the already mentioned John Clark (later Signor Brocolini) and his Detroit team won a regional tournament, and were awarded a trophy consisting of a silver cup "mounted on three miniature bats. The lid of the cup is of oval shape, and in a depression has a silver ball, the emblem of success. Between the bats, constituting the standard, are also placed *facsimiles* of the square and circular bases. The prize is therefore quite appropriate, in addition to being of a novel model."¹¹⁴ This less complex (and much smaller) version of the imagery on Creighton's tomb is not known today, but there may have been other experiments of this kind at the time.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.



Fig. 15. Karl Müller, early photo of *Baseball Player* statuettes, 1868. Cast metal, 10" high. After Hoover, "Baseball as Civilization," 69. Photo: author.

By 1868, the German born Karl L. H. Müller, who had arrived in the United States in 1850, had produced small cast-metal figurines of a baseball pitcher and batter, of which several examples as well as an early photo (from a Brooklyn photographic studio) (fig. 15) survive.¹¹⁵ These works are in the

mode of the innovative American genre sculptor John Rogers (1829–1904), although Rogers—perhaps surprisingly—did not take

up the subject of baseball. Müller's diminutive pitcher displays a stretching leg and a bent leg that might suggest the pose of McNamee's first baseman. Müller's figures may have been inspired by an 1867 pair of a cricket bowler and batsman, each a foot high, executed in the then popular medium of statuary porcelain (also called Parian) after designs by T. Fowke.¹¹⁶ This reproductive technology in which a vitreous glaze was given to porcelain to create a marble-like finish was mostly used in England, the source of these figures, but the inexpensive statuettes were often exported to the United States. By the 1870s, Parian production became more common in the United States as well, and in 1876, an exceptionally elaborate Parian confection in the form of a baseball trophy (fig. 16) and was produced by the factory of Ott & Brewer in Trenton, New Jersey, and displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.¹¹⁷ The designer was the American sculptor Isaac Broome (1836–1922). The description from the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* is the most detailed:

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

A fine specimen of this class is the base ball vase three feet three inches high. The vase is ten-sided, surmounted by a circular plinth, from which the main vase rises. The stem of the vase is formed by a sheaf of base ball bats, held together by a belt and spreading outward from the handles of the bats, which are at the bottom, to the large ends. Above this sheaf is a flat surface, in which there is a figure in bas-relief of a player “running for his base.” Above this again and forming the upper edge, is a wreath of laurel leaves, and filling the mouth of the jar is seen the upper half of an immense base ball upon which sits perched an American eagle.

Standing on top of the plinth, around the stem of the jar, are three figures, each 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches high, representing the pitcher, striker and catcher. The pitcher is seen with his left arm thrown across his chest and his right hand raised at the moment of throwing the ball, which has not yet left his fingers. The striker holds the bat up behind his head, with both hands ready to strike the ball; and the catcher is shown with the ball resting in his hands as he has just caught it. The figures are shown in base ball costume, the anatomy of the bare arms and stockinged legs is perfect and the figures are full of life and action.¹¹⁸



Fig. 16. Isaac Broome, *Baseball Vase*, 1876. Parian (statuary porcelain), 39" high. New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ. Photo: author.

To this, one might add that there is a frieze of balls below the sheaf of bats, and that in the relief zone there are figures of a pitcher and a catcher as well as a runner. The three-dimensional players are about fifteen inches high and were also sold separately.

The eagle imparts a patriotic tone to this peculiar object. The gathered bats suggest the antique motif of the fasces, a symbol of strength through unity, popular in the Civil War era as a patriotic symbol, but also appropriate to the teamwork necessary in baseball. This notion of baseball as emblematic of American national identity recalls Willson's Indian Peace Medal reliefs (fig. 10). Broome's work garnered mostly positive reviews at the Centennial Exposition, and no doubt the patriotic elements helped to bring it in line with the celebratory nationalism of that famous fair.¹¹⁹ The work was basically intended as a virtuoso display of what



Fig. 17. Douglas Tilden, *Baseball Player*, 1888-1889. Bronze, slightly over life size. Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Photo: author.

Ott & Brewer could achieve in Parian, although some money must have been made in selling the individual figurines. In 1887, Hart Brewer, one of the owners of the firm, prevailed on N. E. Young, the president of baseball's National League, to accept the "baseball vase" as the championship trophy of the league.¹²⁰

Throughout the 1870s, however, there does not seem to have been any other attempt (besides McNamee's) to create a high art, life-size image of a baseball player.¹²¹ Although the unknown designer of the Creighton Monument as well as Isaac Broome had drawn on the iconographic conventions of classical art to dignify and elevate their sporting artworks, McNamee's *First Base* was far bolder in seizing the antique heroic and athletic male nude as its template,

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

and made thereby a grander claim to the central position of sports in American life. That he was not able to complete the project in a permanent material suggests that McNamee was a bit ahead of his audience. The earliest surviving completed work of this kind dates to 1888–89, an over-life-size bronze pitcher by the California sculptor Douglas Tilden (1860–1935) that still stands in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco (fig. 17).¹²² Tilden's foreign study was in Paris in the time of Rodin (1888 to 1893), not Italy, and the vigorous and naturalistic figure shows this new orientation. But Tilden again uses the stretched leg and the bent leg—as Müller, McNamee and Broome had done—to suggest dynamic tension and power within the figure. Like McNamee, Tilden's first reaction to his arrival in the European promised land of artistic culture and tradition was to undertake that most modern, masculine, and American of subjects, a baseball player.

By around 1890, the further salience of athletic pursuits in American life made Tilden's baseball statue a sensible undertaking. In fact, he had already made a large plaster of a wrestler before he left for Paris, and he went on to produce monumental statues of a boxer and a pair of football players while abroad.¹²³ In the 1870s, however, McNamee's baseball project was still an outlier, combining a high art scale and medium with a genre subject otherwise associated with small, reproducible objects. It was a daring but perhaps ill-advised choice for the ex-sheriff. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle's* advocacy had helped to overcome some challenges in selling the bust of Kalbfleisch, but despite the newspaper's promotion of *First Base* over the course of five years (1873 to 1878), no buyer is known to have come forward. In the 1880s, there is less evidence of McNamee as an active sculptor, but the hotel business sustained the couple, and there is no record of their having returned to Brooklyn for even a visit.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the story of McNamee's interlocking athletic, political, and sculptural careers enlarges the sense of the diversity of nineteenth-century transatlantic culture and society, and gives Brooklyn a new and fitting distinction in the rise of American art and sport.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Stu Hackel, John Thorn, Melissa Dabakis, the Brooklyn Historical Society, the staff of Brooklyn Borough Hall, Robert Hoge and Sylvia Karges of the American Numismatic Society, and Ted Spencer and Tom Shieber of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

Notes

¹ Rhode Island School of Design Museum, acq. no. 36.172. Also see Shelly Mehlman Dinhofer, *The Art of Baseball* (New York: Harmony Books, 1990), 24-25 fig. 14.

² The most pertinent discussion is in Marin A. Berger, *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), 7-46.

³ Paul H. D. Kaplan, "A Mulatto Sculptor from New Orleans': Eugène Warburg in Europe, 1853—1859," in *Blacks and Blackness in European Art of the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Adrienne Childs and Susan Libby (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 69-103.

⁴ Melissa Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

⁵ For an extensive but not exhaustive list of such guides and travel memoirs, see Harold F. Smith, *American Travelers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published Before 1900* (Carbondale-Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1969).

⁶ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, accessed February 23, 2016, <https://bklyn.newspapers.com/>, made available by Brooklyn Public Library.

⁷ For a useful example in American art history, see Arthur S. Marks, "The Statue of King George III in New York and the Iconology of Regicide," *American Art Journal* 13 (Summer 1981): 61–82.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

⁸ Horatio King, *Sketches of Travel, or Twelve Months in Europe* (Washington City [DC]: J. Bradley Adams, 1878), 264. King (1811–1897) was postmaster general late in the presidential term of James Buchanan. His son, Horatio C. King (1837–1918), lived in Brooklyn after the Civil War and had become a significant figure in the Brooklyn Democratic party by 1880. See “Democrats,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 27, 1880, 1. The father no doubt heard of McNamee through the son’s connections among Brooklyn Democrats.

⁹ McNamee is absent in both Gabriel Harrison, “The Fine Arts in Brooklyn,” in Henry R. Styles, ed., *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N.Y. from 1683 to 1884*, 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Munsell and Co., 1884), 2: 1136–1161, and Clark S. Marlbor, *Brooklyn Artists Index* (Brooklyn: self-published, 1993).

¹⁰ Joseph M. Silinonte, *Bishop Loughlin’s Dispensations, Diocese of Brooklyn, 1859–1866*, (Brooklyn: self-published, 1996), 1:116. The elder John’s will is dated July 10, 1832, and makes his wife his executrix; he died in Brooklyn on July 4, 1833, and his widow’s affidavit of 1838 lists five children: Mary, Michael, Ann, John and Thomas, all minors (Abstract of Wills, Administrations and Guardianships in New York State, 1787–1835, New York Probate Abstract, Brooklyn, Kings, New York, 177, 203). On Michael, see his listing in the 1860 census (United States Federal Census, Brooklyn, Ward 2 district 1, 198), where he is described as a forty-five year old “Liquor Dealer,” with \$3000 in real estate and \$6000 in personal assets; Brooklyn City Directory, 1862–64, and 1866; and his obituary, “Death of Michael McNamee,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 1, 1895, 24.

¹¹ See John McNamee’s obituary, “Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 22, 1895, 12.

¹² “Democratic Primary Meetings,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 14, 2 (nominated), and “City of Brooklyn—Official Canvas,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 27, 1856, 2 (elected). He was re-elected in 1858. See “The New Board of Aldermen,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 7, 1858, 2.

¹³ Harold Coffin Syrett, *The City of Brooklyn, 1865–1898* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). On 1815 as the beginning of more substantial Irish-American immigration, see Paul A. Gilje, “The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City before the Great Migration,” in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., *The New York Irish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 70–83, esp. 70–71, 75; in the same volume, see also Hasia R. Diner, “‘The Most Irish City in the Union’: The Era of the Great Migration, 1844–1877,” 87–106, esp. 93, 95.

¹⁴ United States Federal Census, 1860, Brooklyn Ward 2, district 2, Kings, New York, roll M653_763, 323.

¹⁵ Martin W. Littleton, “Historical Sketch of the Democracy of Kings County,” in James K. McGuire, ed., *The Democratic Party of the State of New York* (New York: United States History Company, 1905), 2: 236–60, esp. 241. By the 1860s, Brooklyn was by far the most populous municipality in the county; it was soon to absorb the few remaining villages in Kings.

¹⁶ See also Brooklyn City Directory, 1862, 295; 1863, 294; 1864, 314; 1865, 282; 1866, 352; 1868, 419; and 1869, 421, where he is described as distiller or rectifier; several addresses are given, most commonly 166 Front Street. The recent surge in craft distilling in Brooklyn has revived the memory of the industry’s early economic importance there, and the leading role of Irish immigrants in developing it. See John Leland, “90 Proof New York,” *New York Times*, December 27, 2013, MB1.

¹⁷ Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America; Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin: Field Day, 2008), 272.

¹⁸ Littleton, “Historical Sketch,” 242; political advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 30, 1863, 1, and “The Election,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 4, 1863, 2.

¹⁹ *Brooklyn City Directory*, 1864, 314; 1865, 282; 1866, 352; and 1867, 381–82.

²⁰ At Willoughby and Raymond streets in what is now Fort Greene; *Brooklyn City Directory*, 1866, 352.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

²¹ *New York Evening Post*, May 5, 1869, 4; Henry R. Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: by subscription, 1867–1870), 3:853.

²² According to the United States Federal Census of 1860 (Brooklyn Ward 2, district 2, Kings, New York, roll M653_763, 323), various members of the Doherty family were living with John and Thomas McNamee, including Anne (aged thirty-three), but their relationship is unclear. On February 19, 1866, wedding banns for John McNamee and Jane Dougherty (daughter of George) were waived; Silinonte, *Bishop Loughlin's Dispensations*, I, 116. The marriage took place a week earlier, on February 12, and was conducted by the Rev. Charles Constantine Pise, then a noted figure among American Catholics, whose father was an Italian miniature painter who had come to the United States in 1795; Francesco Durante, ed., *Italoamericana: Storia e letteratura degli italiani negli Stati Uniti 1776–1880* (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), 1:581–83. The wedding announcement (“Married”) in the *New York Times*, February 13, 1866, 5, gives the bride’s name as Jennie. This first name also appears in McNamee’s obituaries: “Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead,” August 22, 1895, 12, and “Obituary Record: John McNamee,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1895, 5, which also indicate that her father was a leather manufacturer from Newark. The *Times* further relates that her three sisters also married distinguished Irish-Americans. Her sister Helen was the wife of William E. Robinson (1814–1892), an Irish-born Democratic congressman from New York in 1867–69 and 1881–85; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000355>, accessed 2/7/17.

²³ His business problems are mentioned in his obituary; “Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead,” August 22, 1895, 12.

²⁴ “About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 3, 1878, 2. The journalist also opined that the “retirement of the latter [Boss McLaughlin], however, from politics, in order to begin a career of evangelization under Mr. Moody, would not create more surprise than the abandonment of affairs for 'high art' by McNamee did.” A second *Eagle* article about McNamee, “Sculpture: John McNamee and His

Works,” appeared on January 7, 1878, 4, which reported that some of his “cronies” believed he was “‘out of his head,’ crazy, imbecile, mad, or otherwise disordered in mind.”

²⁵ These works are first recorded in an article in “John McNamee—‘First Base,’” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 6, 1873, 2, but a later article in the newspaper gives more detail: “After the expiration of his term of office reverses of fortune followed, and as a means of relief from care and thought his old love for art, humble though it may have been at the time, returned, and to foster it he procured a block of stone, a cross between freestone and marble, as he described it, and went to work at it without any preliminary study of his subject in clay, such as professional sculptors are in the habit of making to guide them in their modeling, and chiseled out, with his old and well worn tools, a portrait bust of his wife. The likeness was a surprise to his household and friends, and notwithstanding its success, few among them could be induced to believe that the work was the suggestion of genius, or that it was anything more than the idle fancy of a disappointed man. After this somewhat crude sculpture was finished, Mr. McNamee turned his attention to other subjects, and found one to his taste in the wife of his old friend, the late Barney Williams. Mrs. Williams was a patient sitter and he modelled a portrait bust in plaster, which was highly esteemed. The modelling of this bust in plaster was Mr. McNamee’s first properly directed effort as a sculptor, but he never finished the work, and the model crumbled into its original dust shortly after he went to Europe.” “Sculpture: John McNamee and His Works,” January 7, 1878, 4. Another newspaper account published a few days earlier suggests that Maria Pray was a relative of McNamee’s: “The first pretentious work which came from his chisel was a bust of a relative of his, a very handsome, popular and worthy actress, the universal knowledge by the public of whose lineaments made that public a censorious judge of the artist’s effort. Those who came to criticise remained to praise. There was in it the proof of much talent, a good method and even great capabilities.” “About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men,” January 3, 1878, 2. On Maria Pray, see *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v.

“Barney Williams”; Joseph Jefferson, *Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson*, ed. by Alan S. Downer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1966), 304.

²⁶ As noted in *The American Register*, an American paper published in Paris and London, October 26, 1872, 2, in a long list of American artists working in Europe; his last name is given as MacNamee. The listing appears intermittently throughout 1873 and 1874, but on December 19, 1874, 2, the *Register* gives a new location in a similar area further to the west, viale Principessa Margherita, 52. *The American Register*, under the heading “Art Notes,” had first mentioned McNamee’s presence in Florence on March 30, 1872, 6, but without an address.

²⁷ Sylvia E. Crane, *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1972), 35–50.

²⁸ Giuliana Artom Treves, *The Golden Ring: The Anglo-Florentines 1847–1862*, trans. by Sylvia Sprigge (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1956); Clara Louise Dentler, *Famous Americans in Florence* (Florence: Giunti Marzocco, 1976); and Nathalia Wright, *American Novelists in Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965).

²⁹ Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890), 2:3–5, 378–79; *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Thomas Adolphus Trollope.” The Trollopes bought the land and completed the house in 1850, with money from Thomas’s new wife Theodosia Garrow. Thomas left the premises after Theodosia’s early death in 1865, but the property was not sold until 1872. On the Anglophone intellectual community centered around the “Villino Trollope” in the 1850s and early 1860s, see Artom Treves, *Golden Ring*, 129–46. The McNamees were in the house by 1887, and perhaps much earlier. They must have rented it, as their names do not appear in Florentine property records; Agenzia del Territorio archive, Conservatoria dei Registri Immobiliari.

³⁰ “John McNamee—‘First Base,’” March 6, 1873, 2: “The great sculptors of Florence, Powers, Ball and Hart, are all visitors to his atelier and speak of the work in terms of praise and express wonder at the perseverance which has enabled a novice in art to win a leading position as a sculptor, almost at the outset. Mr. McNamee is entirely self-taught; he had no teacher here in Brooklyn, and what knowledge he has acquired abroad has been from observation alone.” The references are to Hiram Powers (1805–1873), dean of American sculptors of that era in Florence, who died there; Thomas Ball (1819–1911), an American who spent most of his long career in Florence; and Joel Tanner Hart (1810–1877), another American sculptor long in Florence. Powers and Hart both had studios on the Piazza Indipendenza, where the Villino Trollope, the McNamees’ residence, by 1887 and perhaps earlier, was located. See Crane, *White Silence*, 208, 211; Claudio Paolini, *A Sentimental Journey: inglesi e americani a Firenze tra ottocento e novecento; i luoghi, le case, gli alberghi* (Florence: Polistampa, 2013), 61. On the concentration of American artists in this particular corner of the city, known as Barbano, see Grazia Gobbi Sicca, “An American Pantheon at the Cimitero agli Allori,” in Francesca Bardazzi and Carlo Sisi, eds., *Americans in Florence: Sargent and the American Impressionists* (Venice: Marsilio, 2012), 44–55, esp. 44.

³¹ Mary Craig’s bust was in an advanced state by July 22, 1875. “General James B. Craig,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 2, 1875, 4. General Craig’s bust was based on a photograph, and a clay version was in progress late in 1875; “A Visit to Ex-Sheriff McNamee’s Studio in Florence,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 16, 1876, 2. However, since both father and daughter had been abroad (their return to the United States was mentioned in “General James B. Craig,” August 2, 1875, 4), they surely had visited McNamee in Florence, and Mary must have sat for him. James Barnes Craig, an attorney, was a native of Lexington, KY, who moved to New York City while still in his teens, and was a partner in the firms of Craig and Webster, and also Sidney, Hamilton, and Craig. He was appointed to the legal office of Judge Advocate General by December 4, 1868, and in 1867–69, he chaired Democratic Committee meetings in Brooklyn. By May 1878, he was in

bankruptcy, and moved to Colorado, where he died the next year. Mary Craig (1856–1938), married to Edward T. Bradford in “the most brilliant affair” of the Brooklyn season on January 26, 1876, also moved to Colorado, where she had a notable career as a suffragist and educator, serving as the state superintendent of public instruction and later as president of the National Education Association. On Gen. Craig (not to be confused with General James Craig of Missouri), see the following, all in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*: “Personal,” December 4, 1868, 2; “Democratic General Committee,” October 6, 1869, 2; “General James B. Craig,” August 2, 1875, 4; “Bankruptcy of General Craig,” June 8, 1878, 4; “Craig,” November 19, 1878, 4; and “The Recent Dead,” November 2, 1879, 4; “The Brooklyn Democrats,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1875, 8; W. F. Stone, *History of Colorado* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918), 2:783–84; Heidi Kleinpeter Caldwell, “Mary Carroll Craig Bradford: Providing Opportunities to Colorado Women and Children through Suffrage and Education” (PhD diss., Texas A and M University, 2009), 20. On Mary Craig, in addition to Stone and Caldwell (above), see: “A Wedding Soon to Occur,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 8, 1876, 4, and “Hymeneal,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 27, 1876, 2; Lynne Marie Getz, “Mary Carroll Craig Bradford,” in Maxine Schwarz Seller, ed., *Women Educators in the United States, 1820–1993* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), 56–62.

³² “A Visit to Ex-Sheriff McNamee’s Studio in Florence,” January 16, 1876, 2. This work was still only in plaster as of July 22, 1875. See “General James B. Craig,” August 2, 1875, 4, whereas King saw it in marble during his 1875 visit. See King, *Sketches of Travel*, 264. The Craigs and the Kingsleys had traveled in Europe together, and Annie Kingsley was Mary Craig’s principal bridesmaid at her wedding. Also see “Hymeneal,” January 27, 1876, 2. On William C. Kingsley (1833–1885), see St. Clair McKelway, *William C. Kingsley* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle Book Printing Department, 1885); Syrett, *City of Brooklyn*, 75; and Richard Haw, *Art of the Brooklyn Bridge: A Visual History* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 37–40, on Kingsley’s venality.

³³ Despite the pious assertions that Kingsley had never made the least attempt to influence the *Eagle's* coverage, see McKelway, *Kingsley*, 80. See also Raymond A. Schroth, *The Eagle and Brooklyn: A Community Newspaper 1841–1955* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1974), 31, 75, 79.

³⁴ See "Art and Artists," *Folio* (a Boston periodical), 10, no. 4 (April, 1874): 109, which states: "John McNamee, the American sculptor, has recently sent home a fine bust of D. C. Hall, the well-known musician." See also *Fifteenth Exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Sons, 1884), 61. There are two versions of McNamee's portrait of D. C. Hall (nos. 9 and 12) that were on display in the Fine Arts Section of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association in Boston during September and October 1884.

³⁵ See "A Visit to Ex-Sheriff McNamee's Studio in Florence," January 16, 1876, 2, which states: "Mr. McNamee is also at work on a bust of Mr. Jules Perkins, the American basso, who died in England last Spring."

³⁶ <http://qw1k1970puz.livejournal.com/49239.html>, accessed 2/5/17. Several other finished busts were also seen by Alderman Jacob I. Bergen of Brooklyn during a visit to McNamee's studio on July 22, 1875; "John Mc Namee," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 16, 1875, 4. See his obituary, "John M'Namee," *New York Tribune*, August 22, 1895, 7, which cites unspecified busts for "New York and Boston people."

³⁷ "Barney Williams," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 19, 1879, 4. The bust was apparently already underway late in 1877, according to the newspaper article, "Sculpture: John McNamee and His Works," January 7, 1878, 4, which related that it was "so expressive as to draw tears from the widow whenever she visits the atelier of the sculptor." Williams' birth name was Bernard Flaherty. The Green-Wood Cemetery monument is on lot 13464, Section 111. The work is well described in an article on "The Graves of Actors," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 25, 1879, 3: "The monument is a granite structure of elegant though chaste design, fine polish and artistic finish. A niche in the same contains an exquisitely chiseled bust of the favorite actor,

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

by John McNamee, an American sculptor, residing at Florence, Italy. The bust is of pure statuary marble and is an excellent likeness of Mr. Williams. Above the niche is a harp entwined with shamrocks and laurels, typical of the comedian's native land and his fame. Below the niche are following words: "Bernard Flaherty, 'Barney Williams.' Born June 19, 1824. Died April 28, 1876." It is understood that the design is that of Mrs. Williams. The view from the cemetery at this point is especially fine, and no more beautiful resting place could have been selected for one whose name was as 'familiar in the mouths of men as household words.'" Williams is said to have left an estate of \$400,000; "The Will of Barney Williams," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 5, 1876, 3.

³⁸ Charles Henry Hart, *Browere's Life Masks of Great Americans* (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1899).

³⁹ Also known as Wilson or J. Wilson Macdonald; Albert TenEyck Gardner, *American Sculpture: A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1965), 23; Elmer Sprague, *Brooklyn Public Monuments: Sculpture for Civic Memory and Urban Pride* (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2008), 124–25: PP-3.

⁴⁰ "An Artistic Triumph," *Irish American Weekly*, October 25, 1873, 4; "Robert Cushing," *Irish American Weekly*, March 16, 1896, 4; "Sculptor Robert Cushing," *Irish World*, April 11, 1896, 2; "Robert Cushing's Art," *New York Times*, March 29, 1896, 26.

⁴¹ Anne Weber-Scobie, "The Life and Work of the Irish American Artist John Mulvaney (1839–1906)," unpublished essay, 1993, copy at library of the Frick Collection.

⁴² Marie de Mare, G. P. A. Healy, *American Artist: An Intimate Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: McKay, 1954); "A Great Catholic Artist," *Irish World*, July 7, 1894, 6. Healy married an English Protestant, whom he eventually converted to his faith.

⁴³ “The Late Martin Kalbfleisch,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 13, 1873, 2; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, s.v. “Kalbfleisch, Martin,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000005>, accessed 2/7/17; Stiles, *History of the City of Brooklyn*, 2:438, 454, 492–94; Syrett, *City of Brooklyn*, 27–30; Littleton, “Historical Sketch,” 240, 242–43; and Michael Redmond, “Martin Kalbfleisch, Mayor of the City of Brooklyn,” typescript (after 1962), New York Public Library. Both Littleton and Redmond should be used with caution, as they contain errors.

⁴⁴ “About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men,” January 3, 1878, 2.

⁴⁵ “Sculpture: John McNamee and His Works,” January 7, 1878, 4.

⁴⁶ “Out of Office,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 7, 1878, 4.

⁴⁷ See for example “The Arts,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 15, 1866, 2. The exhibitions did not stress the work of Brooklyn artists.

⁴⁸ Karen Yvonne Lemmey, “Henry Kirk Brown and the Development of American Public Sculpture in New York City, 1846–1876” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2005), 80–86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 90–133, esp. 108; and Jeffrey Richman, *Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery* (Brooklyn: Green-Wood Cemetery, 1998), 12–14, 33–34. Brown had already executed a smaller monument for Green-Wood in 1848.

⁵⁰ Karen Lemmey, “A History of American Sculpture from Green-Wood’s Memorials,” in Jeffrey I. Richman, ed., *Green-Wood at 175: Looking Back/Looking Forward* (Brooklyn: Green-Wood, 2013), 118–27, esp. 119.

⁵¹ Elmer Sprague, *Brooklyn Public Monuments: Sculpture for Civic Memory and Urban Pride* (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2008), 124–25. See cat. PP-3, James W. A. MacDonald, *Washington Irving*, 1871, donated by Demas Barnes), 130–31; and cat. PP-6, John G. Draddy, *Thomas Moore* [an Irish song-writer], 1879,

donated by the St. Patrick Society of Brooklyn), 136–37; and Brown’s *Lincoln*, donated by the War Fund Committee of King’s County. On the latter, see also Lemmey, “Henry Kirk Brown,” 254–67.

⁵² The installation is recorded in “Justice Done to City Hall,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 23, 1848, 3. In line with tradition, the figure was blindfolded and held scales.

⁵³ On Powell’s career, Stiles, *History of the City of Brooklyn*, 2:427; and Littleton, “Historical Sketch,” 240. For an erroneous later claim that Powell’s bust was also by McNamee, see his obituary, “Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead,” August 22, 1895, 12.

⁵⁴ *Brooklyn Union*, November 8, 1872, 2, 4.

⁵⁵ Glenn V. Sherwood, *Labor of Love: The Life and Art of Vinnie Ream* (Hygiene, CO: Sunshine Press Publications, 1997), 217, 231, 246–49, 396, n. 48–49, fig. 12–10; Edward S. Cooper, *Vinnie Ream: An American Sculptor* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 2004), 165–66, 176, 185–86 (the author seems unaware of the work’s survival). Powell’s somewhat fawning and flirtatious letter to Ream, of July 16, 1873, promises that come November he will have “no difficulty in ‘shaping’ the matter so that I can secure the work for you.” Vinnie Ream Hoxie and R. L. Hoxie Papers, box 4, folder 6 (Washington DC: Library of Congress). A photocopy of an advertisement for the “American Institute Grand Exhibition of National Industries” (September 7 to November 4, 1873) and Ream’s participation in it can be found in box 6, folder 4 of the same repository.

⁵⁶ Alderman Richardson offered the resolution, specifying the work should be “at an expense not to exceed \$1,000, either a portrait or bust.” See “Common Council,” *Brooklyn Daily Times*, December 23, 1873, 2. Richardson pointed out that the first mayor of Brooklyn, George Hall, had been memorialized with two painted portraits marking his widely separated terms in office (1834 and 1855–56).

⁵⁷ “Controller Powell’s Bust,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 19, 1875, 4.

⁵⁸ “Safes Are Busts’ Pedestals,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 1, 1906, 7; New York City Art Commission, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York* (New York: City of New York, 1909), 201.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

⁵⁹ “A Bust of Martin Kalbfleisch,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 22, 1879, 2.

⁶⁰ “A Bust of Martin Kalbfleisch,” April 22, 1879, 2.

⁶¹ Sprague, *Brooklyn Public Monuments*, 124-25, 130-31, 136-37.

⁶² “A Bust of Martin Kalbfleisch, April 22, 1879, 2.

⁶³ “A Bust of Martin Kalbfleisch,” April 22, 1879, 2. The *Brooklyn Daily Union-Argus* (“The Aldermen Yesterday,” April 22, 1879, 2) weighed in on this debate with some cynicism: “It was stated very distinctly that the relations of deceased would have nothing to do with this particular bust because of its unlikeness to their father; but this little circumstance did not have a feather’s weight of influence in the discussion which developed the general admiration of the Board for all noble characters, and its high appreciation of the art of sculpture.” The *Brooklyn Daily Times*, April 22, 1879, 2, was less skeptical. Eugene L. Armbruster, *Brooklyn’s Eastern District* (Brooklyn: self-published, 1942), 185, very briefly alludes to this controversy, without clarifying that the sculptor had been a Brooklyn politician.

⁶⁴ New York City Art Commission, *Annual Report of the Art Commission for 1905* (New York: City of New York, 1906), 28 (both busts are in Borough Hall, room unspecified); New York City Art Commission, *Catalogue of the Works of Art*, 201. The Kalbfleisch bust was then in the Brooklyn Municipal Building, the smaller predecessor of the current structure of that name. The Powell bust, acquired in 1874, was then in the borough president’s office in Borough Hall.

⁶⁵ The council chamber was revamped after 1903 because of structural problems, which would have displaced them if the fire had not. See William J. Conklin and Jeffrey Simpson, *Brooklyn’s City Hall* (New York: City of New York Department of General Services, 1983), 72–73. By 1906, the busts were located over office safes within the building. See “Safes Are Busts’ Pedestals,” June 1, 1906, 7.

⁶⁶ The work is 42 x 34.375 in. See a circa 1986 brochure compiled by Barbara Gallati for the Brooklyn Museum, “Borough Hall Portrait Collection,” collection of the Brooklyn Historical Society.

⁶⁷ "Art Notes," *American Register*, March 30, 1872, 6; "Mr. John McNamee," *New York Herald*, February 26, 1873, 9; "John McNamee—'First Base,'" March 6, 1873, 2; "John Mc Namee," August 16, 1875, 4; "A Visit to Ex-Sheriff McNamee's Studio in Florence," January 16, 1876, 2; "About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men," January 3, 1878, 2; "Sculpture: John McNamee and His Works," January 7, 1878, 4; "Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead," August 22, 1895, 12; and "Obituary Record: John McNamee," August 22, 1895, 5; "John M'Namee," August 22, 1895, 7.

⁶⁸ "Art Notes," 6. This newspaper had been founded in 1868 by the American celebrity dentist (!) Thomas Evans, long resident in Paris, and has extensive arts coverage; Gerald Carson, *The Dentist and the Empress; The Adventures of Dr. Tom Evans in Gas-lit Paris* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 145.

⁶⁹ "Mr. John McNamee," February 26, 1873, 9.

⁷⁰ "John McNamee—'First Base,'" March 6, 1873, 2.

⁷¹ Ibid. The section relevant to the baseball statue: "After visiting the various art centres [*sic*] on the Continent he settled at Florence, and the first work which engaged his attention was the modelling of a baseball player. McNamee was known here as a noted ball player, and it is quite natural that his knowledge of the game and the magnificent action which it calls into play on the part of those who engage in it should excite his admiration. He chose for his subject 'The First Base,' and probably for the purpose of more severe study has worked his model up nude from life. The figure is poised upon the left foot with the right touching the base, and the body bent forward with every muscle strung to the utmost tension in anticipation of the coming ball. This model has engaged Mr. McNamee's attention during the past two years, or during his residence in Florence, and all who have seen it express astonishment at the force of the work, and wonder that he should select so trying a subject for his first important essay in the art, for it is conceded to be one which but few of our leading sculptors would attempt to handle. This sculpture is an exemplification of violent action, which is

not always pleasant to study, and yet it is said that Mr. McNamee has combined a grace and refinement in his study that excites the admiration of his visitors.”

⁷² On Healy, see de Mare, *Healy*.

⁷³ “John Mc Namee,” August 16, 1875, 4: “His master piece is a young man playing base ball, standing in a position which you so often see when they are starting to catch the ball. It is only yet in clay, but I think it will be good.” On Bergen (1837–1885), from an old Brooklyn family and a major figure in the Brooklyn Democratic Party, see his obituary, “Passed Away,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 1, 1885, 4. On Campbell, see *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, s.v. “Campbell, Felix,”

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000082>, accessed 2/7/17.

⁷⁴ Peter Morris, “From First Baseman to Primo Basso: The Odd Saga of the Original Pirate King (Tra La!),” *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 15, no. 2 (2007): 46–65; Peter Morris, *Baseball Fever: Early Baseball in Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 90–91, 113–14, 230. Also see Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun? An Informal History of Baseball's Pioneer Era, 1843–1870* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 22–23, 53, 92, 211, 268. Morris is practically the only modern scholar aware of John McNamee, but he does not mention the lost baseball statue.

⁷⁵ The letter was dated December 28, 1875. For the other relevant portions of this interview, see “A Visit to Ex-Sheriff McNamee’s Studio at Florence,” January 14, 1876, 2: “As I had never heard Chadwick say anything about the ex-Sheriff in that respect, I inquired of him how it was.

‘Don’t you remember the old York street lot, near the station house?’ he asked.

‘I should think so,’ said I, as visions of the old hostile ground of the boys of the Second and Fifth wards pass before my view—and the memory of sundry bloody noses and torn unmentionables, the result of disputes as to the respective merits of old Constitution No. 7, and other engine companies brought a smile to my ‘phiz.’

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘years before the formation of the Atlantic Club, I used to get some of the 'boys' together on a good afternoon, and go in there and play the old game where you used to 'sock' one another with the ball. My place of business was close by there, in York street, then, and after a while we practiced regularly until the principal of the school (No. 7) complained to the mayor that we interfered with the progress of the scholars in some way, and we had to stop playing there. Shortly after that the Gothams organized, and after them the Atlantic club was formed.’

‘Did you go into the Atlantic?’

‘No, but I helped to organize the Pastimes—the City Hall Club, as it was called. Billy Barre, now Register, Steve Story and some others, played on the nine, and we had a good time while the organization was going. When the Pastimes broke up I joined the Atlantic, only as a paying member, however.’”

⁷⁶ The best recent guide to these issues is John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

⁷⁷ See the following box scores with commentary in the *New York Clipper*: September 4, 1858, 159 (Orientals vs. Pastimes); October 9, 1858, 197 (Excelsiors vs. Pastimes); June 4, 1859, 51 (Neoshos vs. Pastimes) (praise of Carroll’s fielding); August 27, 1859, 149 (Excelsiors vs. Pastimes, Atlantics vs. Pastimes) (good fielding by Carroll and McNamee); September 10, 1859, 162 (Eagles vs. Pastimes). See also Marshall D. Wright, *The National Association of Base Ball Players, 1857–1870* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2000), 23–24, and 36.

⁷⁸ “Old Boys,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 2, 1877, 1. McNamee batted third and scored three times; his friend Billy Barre was also in the lineup. McNamee, remarked Chadwick, is “now quite a sculptor in Italy.” More than a decade later, Chadwick, using the pen name “Old Chalk,” once again reminisced about this game, calling McNamee “an American sculptor of note in Florence”; “Baseball in Its Infancy,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 15, 1889, 4.

⁷⁹ “Our Old Boys,” December 3, 1877, 2.

⁸⁰ Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time; New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820–1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 121–27, 138–41.

⁸¹ “Old Boys,” December 2, 1877, 1; “Our Old Boys,” December 3, 1877, 2; and “Baseball in Its Infancy,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 15, 1889, 4. See also Morris, *But Didn’t We Have Fun?*, 9, 57, 131–34.

⁸² Wright, *American Novelists in Italy*, xi–xii.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 53, 63.

⁸⁴ Thorn, *Baseball*, 88.

⁸⁵ “John M’Namee,” August 22, 1895, 7.

⁸⁶ “About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men,” January 3, 1878, 2.

⁸⁷ Or so the writer claims. On the complexities of measuring up to norms of masculinity in this period, especially for artists, see Berger, *Man Made*.

⁸⁸ One comparable case here is that of Henry Kirke Brown, who on his arrival in Florence in 1843 undertook a *Young Indian*, another symbol of American rather than European identity. See Karen Lemmey, “‘I Would Just as Soon Be in Albany as Florence,’ Henry Kirke Brown and the American Expatriate Colonies in Italy, 1842–1846,” in Sirpa Salenius, ed., *Sculptors, Painters, and Italy: Italian Influence on Nineteenth-Century American Art* (Padua, Italy: Il Prato, 2009), 67–83, 72–74.

⁸⁹ “Sculpture: John McNamee and His Works,” January 7, 1878, 4.

⁹⁰ Image of George Pinckney, by Gilbert and Bacon; The New York Public Library, Photography Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, persistent URL: digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?55841.

⁹¹ Agasias, usually dated about 100 BCE, collection of the Louvre, Paris, but with many copies and casts of various sizes in collections throughout Europe. See Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the*

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 221–24, cat. no. 42. It was probably intended as an image of a warrior rather than a gladiator.

⁹² “Art Notes,” *The American Register*, March 30, 1872, 6, as discussed above. The critic refers to the “fighting Gladiator,” certainly the same classical work.

⁹³ The comments in “About Two Characteristic Brooklyn Men,” January 3, 1878, 2, may be attempting to justify the nudity of the model by claiming that the subject mandated “a prescription rather than a license to body it forth.” In other words, once he had selected his kinetic, athletic subject, the sculptor had no choice but to prepare a nude study.

⁹⁴ “Ex-Sheriff McNamee Dead,” August 22, 1895, 12.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: “The statue of the base ball man was nude. It was the pet work of ten years. He left it in his studio and his servants destroyed it in his absence. It was just about to be put into bronze. . . . It is said that the man model who posed for the base ball figure became so accustomed to stand in the stretched position of the figure that one leg was several inches shorter than the other.”

⁹⁶ A briefer article, “Obituary Record: John McNamee,” August 22, 1895, 5, mostly dwelt on McNamee’s political career, but concluded with a reference to the baseball statue: “He was an enthusiast on baseball, and his hobby was to make a statue of a first baseman in the act of receiving a badly delivered ball, so that every muscle could be brought out. He made the model in clay, but for some reason the statue was never attempted in marble.” The *Times* obituary also characterized him as “one of the best known persons in the American colony at Florence” and “over six feet in height, courageous, kind, and tenderhearted.” A similar obituary in the *New York Tribune* (“John M’Namee,” August 22, 1895, 7) has a different, vaguer take on the chronology of the baseball statue: “In his younger years he was an enthusiastic amateur baseball player, and several years ago he conceived the idea of chiseling a marble statue of a baseball player in the act of catching a ‘liner.’ He modelled the figure in clay, spending months of toil on the pose, which represented a

baseman with every muscle alert leaning far over to catch the swift-moving sphere. The clay figure was practically completed when his last illness prostrated him.” Brief obituaries in the Irish-American press did not mention the baseball statue; “John McNamee,” *Irish American Weekly*, August 26, 1895, 5; “M’Namee,” *Irish World*, September 1, 1895, 5.

⁹⁷ “The Late John McNamee,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 27, 1895, 6. On Lewis, see for example “A Warm Welcome for the Governor at Monticello,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 5, 1889, 4. Lewis had been given a letter of introduction to McNamee by Felix Campbell. The last reference to McNamee to be found in the newspaper (“Safes Are Busts’ Pedestals”) dates to June 1, 1906, 7, where the Powell and Kalbfleisch busts are mentioned as “neglected.” The Powell bust is treated as less successful, and no artist is cited, but McNamee’s *Kalbfleisch* is praised, its price is (mistakenly) said to have been \$2000, and its creator called “a Brooklynite of prominence in his day.”

⁹⁸ See chapters 2 and 3 in Thorn, *Baseball*.

⁹⁹ Oliver D. Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization: Indian Peace Medals under James Buchanan and Abraham Lincoln,” *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 9, no. 2 (2010): 56–70, esp. 62, fig. 8; Thorn, *Baseball*, 87–92.

¹⁰⁰ Thorn, *Baseball*, 113–114, 323, n. 114; Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization”; and Georgia S. Chamberlain, “Joseph Willson, American Medalist,” *Numismatist* 68 (1955): 1185–87.

¹⁰¹ Atticus, “From Italy,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1854, 2, publishing a letter dated Rome, May 25, 1854; cited by Thorn, *Baseball*, 323, n. 114, and Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 68–69.

¹⁰² “Studios of American Artists,” *Home Journal*, January 26, 1856, 1; cited in Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 69, and Thorn, *Baseball*, 323, n. 114.

¹⁰³ Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), 117–22, for material on Willson’s medals.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. “Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence.” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

¹⁰⁴ In the collection of the American Numismatic Society, New York, ANS 1925.173.17, 62 mm. in diameter; Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 60, fig.7. There is also a larger, cruder variant of this medal with a slightly different relief, though five ball-playing children are again seen; American Numismatic Society, New York, ANS 1915.158.1, 75 mm. in diameter; Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 60, fig.6. This cruder version also appears on the large and small peace medals issued under Lincoln in 1862: American Numismatic Society, New York, ANS 1925.25.1, 75.1 mm. in diameter; Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 66, fig.12; American Numismatic Society, New York, ANS 0000.999.33032, 62 mm. in diameter; Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 67, fig. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Hoover, “Baseball as Civilization,” 65, citing a December 5, 1856 article in the New York *Sunday Mercury*.

¹⁰⁶ The monument can be found in the Brooklyn Green-Wood Cemetery, section 3384, lot 2; Thorn, *Baseball*, 122–27; Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?*, 69–72; Peter J. Nash, *Baseball Legends of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery* (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 2, 8, 10–11, 63–67, 128; Thomas W. Gilbert, “Green-Wood: Baseball’s Elysian Fields,” in Richman, *Green-Wood at 175*, 100–8. Some sources argue that the cause of death was an aggravation of an earlier cricket injury.

¹⁰⁷ For the photo, see Nash, *Baseball Legends*, 64–65, and for the drawing, 67, and “A Ball Player’s Monument,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 6, 1898, 9. The drawing is schematic, omitting many details.

¹⁰⁸ Nash, *Baseball Legends*, 65. The urge to record the details of the game appeared very early.

¹⁰⁹ This is recorded in “A Ball Player’s Monument,” February 6, 1898, 9: “Across the face of the column, surrounded by a circle of oak leaves, cut in the granite, is a design embodying a pair of bats crossed, a cap, a base and a score book, surmounted across the top by a scroll with the word ‘Excelsior’ carved upon it. . . . A base ball fashioned in stone rests lightly upon the topmost pinnacle of the monument.” The word is no longer legible due to the weathering of the stone.

¹¹⁰ See Longfellow's poem, "Excelsior," in *The Poetical Works of H. W. Longfellow* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1858), 117–18. A short, untitled piece in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 20, 1862, 2, suggested that there were risks to violent exercise, and that "in the death of James Creighton there is a warning to others."

¹¹¹ http://www.green-wood.com/burial_results/index.php, accessed 2/5/17. This might reflect a re-interment in conjunction with the installation of a monument.

¹¹² "Out-Door Sports," *New York Times*, July 7, 1866, 3; Barney Williams, McNamee's friend (and later subject) accompanied and entertained the group. The visit to Creighton's grave was also noted in "Sports and Pastimes," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of July 6, 1866, 2, where it was described as the "Mecca of base ball players," but again without any detailed description of the monument.

¹¹³ "A Ball Player's Monument," February 6, 1898, 9. Baseball's most famous early journalist, Henry Chadwick, was later (1909) memorialized at Green-Wood with a tomb festooned with baseball paraphernalia (ball, glove, bats) and, in front of the monument, a miniature baseball diamond. Green-Wood Cemetery, section 131, lot 32004; Nash, *Baseball Legends*, 14–17.

¹¹⁴ *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, September 13, 1865, as cited in Morris, "From First Baseman to Primo Basso," 52.

¹¹⁵ The Yale University Art Gallery (acq. nos. 1932.200 and 1932.201) and the New York Historical Society (acq. nos. 1957.213a and b) each own a set, while the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College owns just the *Batter* (acq. no. AC1947.105); Paula B. Freedman, *A Checklist of American Sculpture at Yale University* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1992), 114. Each figure stands about 10 in. high. These works are described as either in bronze or zinc, and the *Pitcher* was patented. J. Deacon was also involved in their production. On the photo, Hoover, "Baseball as Civilization," 69, fig. 16; Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *American Porcelain 1770–1920* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 33–34. Müller eventually

produced at least six such figures; at the 1875 exhibition of the Artists' Fund Society in New York, he displayed two "very spirited" statuette groups of three baseball players each; "Exhibition of the Artists' Fund Society," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 26, 1875, 3.

¹¹⁶ Paul Atterbury et al., *The Parian Phenomenon; A Survey of Victorian Parian Porcelain Statuary and Busts* (Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset, England: Richard Dennis, 1989), 61, 119: figs. 416–17 (Minton, shapes 445–46). These works may have been inspired by a life-size bronze by Joseph Durham of a boy (Basil Lawrence) with a cricket bat ("Waiting His Innings," London, City of London School, 1866); Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 209 (fig. 273), 212; Ingrid Roscoe with Emma Hardy and M. G. Sullivan, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain, 1660–1851* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), s.v. "Durham, Joseph," citing five other lost cricket figures by this sculptor.

¹¹⁷ Trenton, New Jersey State Museum, acq. no. CH 354.22, with another copy in the Detroit Historical Museum, acq. no. 56.77.1; J. G. Stradling, "American Ceramics and the Philadelphia Centennial," *The Magazine Antiques* 109 (July 1976): 144–58, esp. 148 (pl. 2), 149; Ellen Paul Denker, "Parian Porcelain Statuary: American Sculptors and the Introduction of Art in American Ceramics," *Ceramics in America* (2002): 62–79, esp. 72–75 (figs. 11–13, 15); Frelinghuysen, *American Porcelain*, 33–35, 42 (fig. 34), 166–68 (cat. no. 54), 168–69 (cat. no. 55); Shelly Mehlman Dinhofer, *The Art of Baseball* (New York: Harmony Books, 1990), 31–32.

¹¹⁸ "The Great Exhibition," *Public Ledger*, November 24, 1876, 3.

¹¹⁹ Charles Wyllys Elliott, *Pottery and Porcelain, from Early Times Down to the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876* (New York: D. Appleton, 1876), 341; "American Parian," *Crockery and Glass Journal* 5 (March 22, 1877): 15; Jennie J. Young, *The Ceramic Art: A Compendium of the History and Manufacture of Pottery and Porcelain* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), 464–65; also "Pottery at the American Institute Fair," *The Art Amateur* 1 (November 1879): 126–27, esp. 127, with some critical comments.

Paul H. D. Kaplan. "Marmorean Ballplayer: Sheriff John McNamee of Brooklyn and His Sculptural Career in Florence." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3 no. 1 (Summer, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1580>.

¹²⁰ “The Potteries: Trenton,” *Crockery and Glass Journal* 25, no. 23 (June 9, 1887): 24.

¹²¹ The Hood Museum at Dartmouth College owns a 70.5 in. high painted wooden figure of a baseball pitcher. It is rather crude and static in the mode of folk art cigar store Indians. It was apparently made as advertising for a sporting goods store in Bridgeport, CT, in the 1870s; Jacqueline Bass et al., *Treasures of the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, 1985), 116–17, cat. no. 104, acq. no. S.935.1.113.

¹²² Mildred Albronda, *Douglas Tilden* (San Francisco: Emerald Point Press, 1994), 3, 25 28–30, 33–35, 38–39, 41–43, 139–40; Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 96–97 (fig. 31).

¹²³ Albronda, *Douglas Tilden*, 3, 20, 31–33, 36, 40, 42–43, 68–70.

¹²⁴ Lenamay Green, *A Girl's Journal through Europe, Egypt, and the Holy Land* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1889), 206: “We engaged board this time at a 'pension,' or private boarding-house, kept by an American lady, Madam McNamee, whose husband was a sculptor. . . .” Thomas Hardy stayed at the establishment in 1887; Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2006), 259. See also Lilian Whiting, *The Golden Road* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1918), 122. By the late 1890s, Mrs. McNamee advertised in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (see for example September 3, 1899, 18). In his *New York Tribune* obituary (“John M’Namee,” August 22, 1895, 7), McNamee is said to have left “a considerable fortune to his widow,” and an obituary in the *Irish American Weekly* (“John McNamee,” August 22, 1895, 5) remarks that “he was reputed to be wealthy.”