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The history of Salem-Keizer's first pro team

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Of the Keizertimes

Salem's first professional baseball team, the Salem Senators, will make their return to the diamond this summer as a part of the new Mavericks Independent League, being hosted at Volcanoes Stadium.

The Senators were founded in 1940 after being purchased by George E. Waters — the Senators played their home games at Waters Field, which was located on the east side of 25th Street SE.

A crowd of 4,865 showed up for the Senators first game against the Yakima Pippins — at the time, it was the largest crowd ever for a sporting event in Salem.

After Waters died in 1942, his widow sold the team to the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League. The Beavers used the

organization as a farm league team.

Due to World War II, the Senators didn't play from 1943 to 1945, but resumed competition in 1946. They played in the Western International League (WIL) from 1940 until 1954 — they were an affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies in their final season in the WIL.

The WIL was formed into the Northwest League (NWL), where the Senators played from 1955 to 1965. In 1961, the Senators were renamed the Salem Dodgers after becoming a farm team of the Los Angeles Dodgers — Hall of Fame and manager Bobby Cox played for the Salem Dodgers in 1962. Cox managed in the big leagues for over three decades, was a four-time Major League Baseball (MLB) manager of the year (1985, 1991, 2004, 2005) and won a World

Series with the Atlanta Braves in 1995.

The Salem Dodgers disbanded after the '65 season, but rejoined the NWL as an independent organization in 1977 after California businessman Carl Thompson revamped the original team — they lost their first contest to the Portland Mavericks by a score of 9-8.

The Senators shared a facility with Parrish Little League and played their home games at Holland Youth Park. They also would play games at Chemeketa Community College.

After playing three seasons of independent ball, the Senators became an affiliate of the California Angels in 1981. Prior to the 1982 season, team President, Clint Holland, signed a player development agreement with the California Angels and changed the team name to the Salem Angels.

Despite finishing the season with a losing record, the Salem Angels were able to win the NWL north division and advance to the championship series — the Angels went on to win their only league title in franchise history. It was the first time a NWL team won the title with a losing record in league history, which was a distinction that lasted for more than 20 years.

The '82 Salem Angels were managed by Joe Maddon, who has since gone onto manage in the major leagues for nearly two decades. He has been named MLB Manager of the Year three times (2008, 2011, 2015) and led the Chicago Cubs to a World Series title in 2016 — their



Submitted Last week, the Mavericks Independent League released the Senators new jerseys for the 2021 season.



Marion County Historical Society Waters Field was the home of the Senators for nearly 25 seasons before burning down in 1966.

first championship in 108 years. The team also featured Mark McLemore, an 18-year MLB vet who played four seasons as an infielder with the Seattle Mariners, and Kirk McCaskill, who played in the MLB for 12 years and struck out more than 1,000 batters.

In 1988, the organization once again became an affiliate of the Los Angeles Dodgers and changed their name back to the Salem Dodgers.

Mike Piazza, the Salem Dodgers most famous alum, played for the team during their final season in 1989, batting .268 with eight homers and 25 RBIs. Piazza played in the big leagues from 1992 to 2007 and was a 12-time All-Star as well as a 10-time Silver Slugger Award winner. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2016.

Other notable Salem

Angels/Dodgers players include:

DANTE BICHETE: Bichette played for Salem in 1984 and was a four-time All-Star with the Colorado Rockies in the '90s. In 1995, he led the National League (NL) in homers and RBIs and won a Silver Slugger Award.

MIKE FINLEY: Finley won 200 games in the major leagues as a starting pitcher and struck out over 2,600 hitters. He was selected to five All-Star Games and was inducted into the Los Angeles Angels Hall of Fame — Finley played with Salem in the '85 season.

ROBERTO HERNANDEZ: Hernandez spent the summer of 1986 in Salem before going onto a 17-year big league career, playing with 11 different teams. Hernandez pitched in more

than 1,000 games and was also selected to a pair of All-Star Games.

JIM LEFEBVRE: Lefebvre was with the Salem Dodgers in 1963. Two years later, he broke into the MLB as an infielder and won the NL Rookie of the Year with the Los Angeles Dodgers — he also helped them to a World Series title that same year. The following season, Lefebvre was selected to his lone All-Star Game.

HENRY RODRIGUEZ: Rodriguez played for six teams over his 10-year stretch in the majors as a left fielder. He played for the Salem Dodgers in 1988.

In 1990, team owners moved the organization to Yakima, Wash, where they became the Yakima Bears. The team stayed in Yakima until 2012, which is when the organization moved to Hillsboro to become the Hillsboro Hops.

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