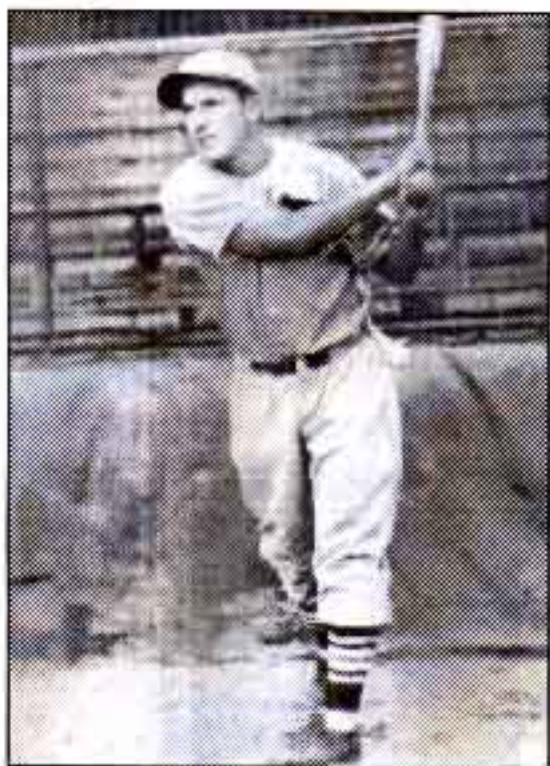


# **The Story of Joe Medwick and Summit**

**From Carteret High School to  
the Summit Red Sox to  
the Saint Louis Cardinals to  
the Baseball Hall of Fame**

*by Arthur Cotterell*

The time is the summer of 1928 and over at Memorial Field in Summit there is a high school sophomore who is playing for the semi-professional Summit Red Sox of the Lackawanna Baseball League. This young athlete, who is creating quite a bit of interest playing with players who are older and have a great deal more experience, some former professionals, is Joe Medwick of Carteret High School. He is already an outstanding athlete in high school, starring in football, basketball, and track, as well as baseball. Medwick will sign with the St. Louis Cardinals within two years, go on to a great career in the National League, become the most feared hitter in the league in the thirties, win a batting title, win a triple crown, and lead the Cardinals to a world



*Medwick at bat*



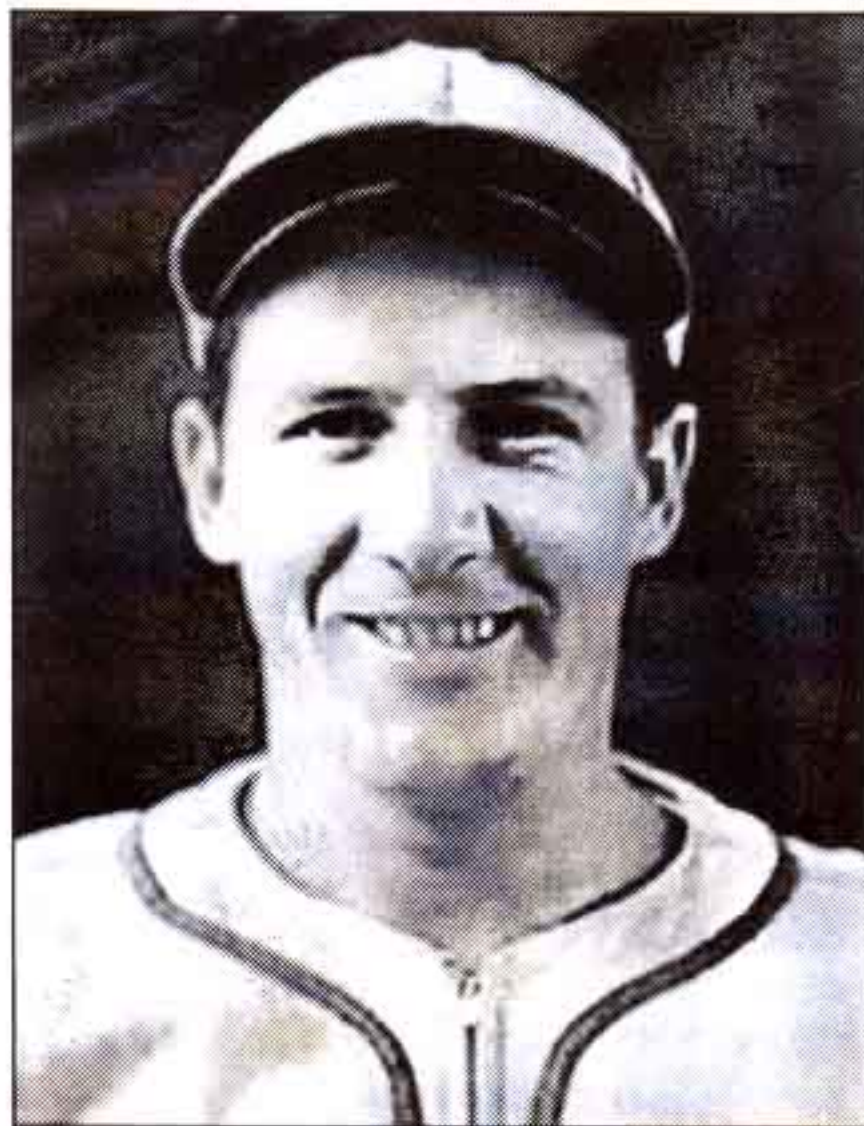
*("Medwick" contined from page 1)*

series championship. Little did the people who crowded the Memorial Field stands on weekend afternoons that summer of 1928 foresee what that young, 16 year - old athlete was to go on to accomplish.

Joe Medwick was born in 1911, the youngest of four children of parents who had emigrated from Budapest, Hungary. His parents had come to Carteret, New Jersey, and their son went on to become an outstanding athlete at Carteret High School. He was as good in football as he was in baseball, and was the subject of much recruiting, with Notre Dame the front runner to gain the talents of this standout running back. Medwick wanted to continue playing baseball during the summers, and the Summit Red Sox of the very strong Lackawanna Baseball recruited him to play in a league where he would be a much younger player than his teammates.

Actually, Medwick played in Summit in the 1928, 1929 and 1930 seasons. From the very beginning he was a powerful hitter, and he consistently batted third in a lineup where his teammates were quite a bit older than this high school teenager. In the 1929 season, he led the league in hitting with a .438 batting average. As his graduation from high school drew near, he was drawing a lot of attention from baseball scouts as well as college recruiters. The latter saw him as a great running back for their colleges. The decision was going to be a tough one for a young man who was eighteen and had just graduated from high school. What to choose? He loved both sports. In June of 1930 he decided to sign with the St. Louis Cardinals of the National League. He signed his contract while leaning against the field house at Memorial Field in Summit. But he still did not get the lure of college football out of his mind, so he persuaded the Cardinal scout who signed him to list him under the assumed name of Mickey King. He was sent to the Cardinal farm team at Scottsdale, Pennsylvania in the Middle Atlantic League, where he batted .419 over the summer. There was to be no college football, he was going to be great as a baseball player. And there would be no Mickey King, as he acknowledged that he had been playing under an assumed name. He was Joe Medwick and that would be a name that baseball fans across the country would soon know.

The Cardinals, realizing that Medwick was going to be a star, moved him up quickly to their top farm team in Hous-



*Joe Medwick*

ton, Texas. It didn't make any difference where he played, Memorial Field, Summit, or Houston, Texas, he was going to be a great hitter. In his first season in Houston he hit .305, and in the following, 1932, he raised that average to .354. He was ready, and the Cardinals brought him up to the major leagues. He was just two years removed from playing at Memorial Field, but, just as they thought, he was ready. Medwick was to become one of the very best hitters in the National League in the 1930's, leading a team that was known as the "Gas House Gang" for its rough and tumble ways to a world series championship in 1934 and to great honors for himself.

1937 proved to be Joe Medwick's greatest year. He took the Triple Crown (leader in home runs, runs batted in, and highest batting average), was voted the Most Valuable Player in the league, and also led the league in eight different batting categories. In addition to being the leader in home runs, batting average, and runs batted in, he also led the league in runs, slugging average, at bats, hits, and doubles. By this time he was recognized as the greatest hitter in the National League.



In the 1940's Medwick was traded to the Brooklyn Dodgers, later the New York Giants, and then back to the Cardinals, finishing his career in 1948 after seventeen years in the major leagues. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1968 and to this day he is still recognized as one of the best hitters to ever play the game. He died at his home in Florida in 1975.

And you might ask, what ever happened to the Summit Red Sox? They continued as a semi-pro team until the outbreak of the Second World War put a stop to much of that activity. Shortly after the war ended, the Lackawanna Baseball League and the Summit Red Sox were both revived under the efforts of a former Summit athlete, Bud Lolatte, and played on for a number of years. But there probably never was another player of the caliber of Joe Medwick to play at Memorial Field.