

Well-deserved honor

In our view

Jimmy Sheckard may deserve a place in Cooperstown, N.Y., but there's no question that he deserved a place of honor in Columbia.

The Susquehanna Valley chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, in conjunction with the Glatfelter Field Foundation and the Columbia Boys' Athletic Association, unveiled a plaque honoring Sheckard in ceremonies at Glatfelter Field last Saturday.

Although Sheckard was born in 1878 in Upper Chanceford Township, York County, his family moved to Columbia when he was a youngster and his athletic skills flourished in the community. A football and baseball player, he was discovered by major league baseball scouts at the age of 16 while playing games against traveling teams that passed through Columbia.

He made his big league debut in 1897 for the Brooklyn Superbas and two years later led the National League with 77 stolen bases.

During his 18 big league seasons, Sheckard twice led the National League in fielding and stolen bases and he held the major league record for bases on balls (147) until Babe Ruth broke it in 1920. He was member of the 1907 and 1908 Chicago Cubs World Series championship teams. Teammates

included Hall of Famers Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers and Frank Chance. Sheckard still ranks among the top 10 players of all time in several defensive categories. The late sportswriter Ring Lardner once called him "the world's greatest baseball player."

After retiring from the game, Sheckard moved back to Columbia before moving to Lancaster. He died on Jan. 15, 1947 -- 50 years after making his big-league debut -- when he was struck by a car on Manheim Pike while walking to work.

A number of communities have claimed Sheckard as their own, including Lancaster. It is clear, however, that he honed his athletic skills while playing in and for Columbia.

The groups involved in bringing Sheckard's story to light and working to honor him are to be congratulated.

The monument bearing his image, as well as his story, is now home.