Key Findings

The image is a black-and-white group portrait of a baseball team posing outdoors on a dirt field. Ten adult men in matching uniforms stand and crouch in two rows, with one older man in civilian clothes (likely the manager or coach) standing in the center back, and a young boy in a matching uniform sitting in the front center. The team members wear light-colored, long-sleeved jerseys with "HOTEL CHASE" arched across the chest, paired with light-colored pants, dark belts, and baseball caps. The coach wears a white short-sleeved shirt, dark trousers, and a light-colored fedora or Panama hat. Several bats are propped up in a makeshift tee or stand in the foreground. The background features a wire backstop fence and some distant trees. The lighting is bright and direct, suggesting a sunny day. The mood is proud and relaxed, typical of an amateur or semi-pro sports team photo. A photographer's watermark, "J. Rutz," is visible in the bottom right corner.

Historical Background

This photograph captures a sponsored amateur or semi-professional baseball team, a common feature of American community life in the early to mid-20th century. Businesses like the Hotel Chase in St. Louis would sponsor teams to build community goodwill, provide recreation for employees, and advertise their brand. These "company teams" or "industrial leagues" were highly popular and competitive. The presence of a young boy as a mascot or batboy was also a typical tradition. To further research this image, one could look into the archives of the Hotel Chase in St. Louis, search local St. Louis newspapers from the 1930s and 1940s for mentions of a "Hotel Chase" baseball team, or look up the photographer "J. Rutz" in St. Louis city directories from that period to narrow down the exact year.

Estimated Date

The estimated time period is the 1930s to 1940s. The style of the baseball uniforms, particularly the baggy pants, long-sleeved jerseys, and short-brimmed caps, is characteristic of this era. The coach's attire, specifically the style of his straw hat and high-waisted trousers, also aligns with the 1930s-1940s fashion. The use of a local business sponsor for a team was very common during the Great Depression and post-WWII years. Confidence Level: Medium to High.

Estimated Location

The location is highly likely to be St. Louis, Missouri. The primary visual clue is the "HOTEL CHASE" text on the uniforms. The Chase Hotel (now the Chase Park Plaza) is a historic and prominent hotel in St. Louis, built in 1922. It was common for local businesses, especially prominent ones like large hotels, to sponsor amateur or semi-pro sports teams in their city. The

photographer's name, "J. Rutz," could potentially be traced to St. Louis city directories from the era to confirm this. Confidence Level: High.

Visual Clues

- **Text:** The jerseys clearly read "HOTEL CHASE" in arched, block lettering. The bottom right corner has a watermark that appears to read "J. Rutz".
- **People:** Ten adult players, one adult coach/manager, and one child mascot/batboy. The players wear matching uniforms: long-sleeved, light-colored jerseys with dark lettering, light-colored pants, dark belts, and dark baseball caps with short brims. The coach wears a white short-sleeved button-down shirt, dark slacks, and a light-colored straw hat (Panama or fedora style). The child wears a miniature version of the team uniform.
- **Objects:** Several wooden baseball bats are visible. Three are propped up in a tripod-like arrangement using a piece of equipment (possibly a catcher's mask or a specialized bat stand) in the foreground. A dark bag or equipment case sits near the child.
- **Environment:** The setting is an outdoor dirt field, likely a baseball diamond. A tall wire mesh backstop fence is directly behind the team. Sparse grass grows in the dirt in the foreground. Trees are visible in the far background on the left and right, indicating a park or recreational field setting.

Technical Details

The image is a black-and-white gelatin silver print, typical of mid-20th-century photography. It shows signs of age, including minor scratches, dust spots, and some fading or silvering around the edges. The contrast is relatively high, and the focus is sharp on the subjects. The presence of a photographer's watermark embossed or printed in the corner indicates a professional studio or local photographer took the picture. The style of the print and the clothing suggest a date between the 1930s and 1950s.