

Originals.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research
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SURVEY RESPONSE REQUESTED.

John Shiffert, author of *Baseball in Philadelphia 1831 – 1900* and other works of baseball history, sent a request that Origins Committee members assist his research for his current project, a work surveying the entire story of baseball, by sending him your response to the following question. He is seeking to identify the game's seminal figures of the 1840s.

In your opinion, who do you think deserves the most credit for the original draft of the Knickerbocker Club's 20 rules:

___ Daniel (Doc) Adams

___ William Wheaton

___ Alexander Cartwright

___ Duncan Curry

___ William Tucker

___ Someone else, _____

___ No one person- they just codified rules that already existed.

John urges respondents to feel free to add any supporting thoughts on

their choices. Email responses to John at:

JohnShiffert@mail.clayton.edu

ORIGINS

THE MONTH IN 19cBB.

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoogroup during the month of May to pursue a number of interesting topics.

FOLLOW-UP.

Earliest Double Plays and First Use of the Term

Craig Waff followed up on this April topic, suggesting that the conditions of 1860 (and earlier) play would have kept down the number of plays in which multiple outs were achieved. Craig eventually came up with an 1857 reference to a player putting out two men at once, couched in language indicating that it was then highly unusual. This opened an exchange of posts between Craig and Glenn Drinkwater about the significance of the reference and the likely frequency of multiple-out plays.

David Ball noted that the term “double play” probably came into being after the play became more common, and reported that in his research he

noted more 3-4-6 double plays than double plays of the modern variety. Glenn Drinkwater opined that more double plays would be found when additional detailed game accounts are located, and noted that a common form of double play—a runner caught off base by a line drive—was not possible under the rules until 1859. Peter Mancuso agreed that double plays resulting from base running errors are the most likely form of early multiple-out plays.

Craig later posted a note from the *Sunday Mercury* in September, 1860, which used “double play” in reference to multiple-out plays. David Ball asked if the term may have come from contemporary usage in another context; John Thorn thought it came from card playing, and later posted several other possibilities. Noel Fliss confirmed that it is used in whist. David Ball, in a post which he headed “derived terminology”, broadened the discussion to other contemporary base ball terms and nicknames. John Thorn posted a reference to “triple play” in wrestling. Jack Little then added outside sources for other terms.

Another speculation by David Ball, that the New York game's three-out innings, with its increased possibilities for defensive

strategies, may have been a factor in its spread, drew the response from Richard Hershberger that his research into the spread of the game doesn't show an early appreciation for such subtleties, until touring clubs showed them off.

**more on Monica
Nucciarrone's new
biography of
Cartwright**

Richard Hershberger sent an update to his earlier post reacting to his first look at Monica's book; having finished it, he changed his first tentative endorsement to a wholly enthusiastic endorsement.

INQUIRIES.

Replica balls

Paul Brown inquired about a source for replica 1845 balls. Brian Sheehy posted a source for lemon-peel balls and also the steps for making them. David Dyte mentioned that since 1845 rules included "soaking" that the ball should be soft.

**Knickerbocker box
score**

Richard Hershberger sent a query about the Knicks' box score reprinted on page 11 in *Peeverly's National Game* by Freyer and Rucker. It looks to Richard like a mock-up, and he would like to know for certain. Craig Waff sent details about the box score, and agreed that it seems a mock-up.

**150 Years of Fordham
Baseball**

Craig Waff posted a recent claim in the media that the first college nine-per-side baseball game was played

on Nov. 3, 1859 between Fordham and St. Francis Xavier College, and asked for verification. John Thorn replied that it is likely correct. The oft-cited Amherst – Williams match in the summer of 1859 was played with Massachusetts rules.

Random Queries

Larry McCray posted two inquiries: the origin of the 1867 poem "Base Ball On The Brain", and about the publication *Bat and Ball*. David Ball could provide a history of the latter, which apparently had only a brief existence; John Thorn noted that it was a biweekly. John also produced two other 1867 appearances of the poem.

GAME ACCOUNT.

**Pittsfield reenacted
first college game**

jon31768@gmail.com
(name not appended) reported on a re-creation game staged by a group of alumni of Williams and Amherst, and added his discovery of an 1859 item describing a game played near Hartford, CT, perhaps the first in that part of that State.

DISCOVERIES.

**Alexander Cartwright
in a muss**

George Thompson posted an 1848 item in which the Hall of Famer is named as a participant in a minor street brawl, and also added comments on its significance. George later posted the *New York Herald's* account of the "muss".

Monica Nucciarrone sent a note that a few items she found in the course of her book research were of the same character.

**more "ball-playing",
not base ball**

George Thompson posted an 1839 item illustrating the point that references to "ball-playing" cannot be assumed to refer to base ball.

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**EVENTUALLY
THEY LEARNED.**

The New York *Sunday Mercury* published the suggestion below on June 17, 1860:

"We hope the gentlemen who have the Japanese in charge will not fail to take them to see a match between some of our base ball clubs; so that our "distinguished visitors" may know something of the innocent recreations of our people. We should much like them to see a match between the Excelsior and Atlantic Clubs. Take them to Hoboken or Brooklyn, at all events, and let them see the numbers of clubs daily in practice."

**SUBMISSION
OF ITEMS.**

Please send items for *Originals* to the editor, Bob Tholkes, at email rjtholkes@msn.com.