

Originals.

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TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

ROUNDAABOUT AND SHORT FOX: 19TH- CENTURY BALL GAMES?

In an 1836 advice manual for boys, *The Village Boys*, the author mentioned that "the boys were playing Round-About [author's italics] on the common." As there were several ball games that incorporated the word "round," it would seem round-about was another variant. The only corroboration I have found so far comes from the *Dictionary of Regional American English*. A 1950 source connected it to South Carolina and equated it to rounders, but then described it as a type of work-up in which the batter went to the outfield, an outfielder came in to the infield, and so on, as players rotated through all the positions. Any further references?

As for "short fox," the term appeared in an 1850 article in *Friend of Youth* about marbles: "You may at any time see twenty, thirty, or even fifty boys all playing at ball, 'short fox' and similar games,..." The placement of the adjective "similar" may mean that short fox was a ball game,

maybe something on the order of town ball, given the number of players. Only two other references have emerged so far. An 1852 reprint of the 1850 article in *The Myrtle* [italicize or underline] repeated the "playing at ball, 'short fox,' and similar games" language. Then an oblique mention came in an 1892 issue of *Science*. An essay about jays harassing a hawk contained this sentence: "They [the jays] threw themselves into the sport, as they seemed to regard it, with all the energy of boys playing 'short fox.'" This meager description hints that short fox might have a chase game, a variation of fox and geese. But questions linger: was it a ball game? related to baseball-type games? did it persist into the 1890s?

Old Harlo [the spelling is correct --not Harlow], *The Village Boys: or Stories to Persuade Boys Not to Quarrel* (Boston: William Peirce, 1836), p. 6; Joan Houston Hall, ed., *Dictionary of American Regional English, Volume IV P-Sk* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002) p. 649; "Marbles," *Friend of Youth*, April 1, 1850, p. 45; "Marbles," *The Myrtle. For Home, and The Sabbath School*, v. 1, n. 37, April 10, 1852, p. 150; and "Hectoring a Hawk," *Science: A*

Weekly Newspaper of All the Arts and Sciences, v. 20, n. 499, August 26, 1892, p. 123.

BALL PLAY IN CHILDREN'S SONG IN 1856

The New Year's number of a children's magazine, *Student & Schoolmate*, featured a musical piece entitled "The Holiday Song" in 1856. The second stanza went as follows:

Hark! we hear our
schoolmates call,

And we see the whizzing
ball

From the bat stick
flying;

Bat the ball,

One and all,

Great and small,

Keep the ball a flying.

"The Holiday Song," in *Student & Schoolmate: A Monthly Reader for School & Home Instruction Containing Original Dialogues, Speeches, Biography, History, Travels, Poetry, Music, Science, Anecdotes, Problems, Puzzles, etc.*, January 1, 1856, p. 108

ANOTHER FEMALE BALL-PLAYER?

In her 1839 advice manual, *The Young Lady's Home*, Louisa Caroline Tuthill packaged a morality tale of a young woman named

Agnes Fleming. In her childhood Fleming was an enthusiastic tomboy, talents that her father encouraged: "To give vigor to body and mind, she was allowed active and even athletic exercises. With her father, she could take long rides on horseback, play ball, pitch quoits, and roll nine-pins...." The tale has no geographic setting, except that it seems to be set in the United States, and in terms of time, it would have taken place sometime before 1839. Tuthill provided her readers, probably mostly females, with an image of at least one young woman transcending limits on physical activity. Louisa Caroline Tuthill, *The Young Lady's Home* (New Haven, Connecticut: Sidney Babcock, 1839), p. 247

ANOTHER BASS BALL REFERENCE

Tucked away in the 1854 *Youth's Casket* was a story entitled "Hiding One's Faults." This moralistic tale centered on lying to cover up the actions of someone else, in this case breaking a window with a batted ball. Indeed much of the story derived from a ball game that one character termed "bass ball": "Let it be a game of bass." Warren, the protagonist, had arrived with a freshly purchased bat and ball. The players tossed a bat to choose up sides, but then shortly into the action, another schoolboy hit the ball so hard that it broke a window in the school. Warren wailed about losing his one and only ball.

In the end, however, in the vein of "No good deed shall go unpunished," Warren suffered punishment for lying to cover up the swing of the perpetrator.

Interestingly enough, the publisher of this periodical was none other than Erastus F. Beadle, not the Beadle who would publish the annual baseball guides in the 1860s. But --cue up the music from the Abner Doubleday region of "The Twilight Zone"-- Erastus apprenticed at the H. and E. Phinney publishing enterprise in 1838 in Cooperstown. "Hiding One's Faults" in *The Youth's Casket : An Illustrated Magazine for the Young* (Buffalo: E. F. Beadle, 1854), pp. 151-152.

AN 1833 BASE BALL REFERENCE?

The *Religious Intelligencer*, in an 1833 article about Sabbath schools, advised youths not to get caught in "foolish disputes" over "mere trifles" such as arguing about "whether you shall play at base or foot ball." The word "base" may have referred to prisoner's base, but the parallel construction of the words "base" and "foot" followed by "ball" suggests that the writer meant base ball.

Send comments, questions, and other correspondence for *Originals* to the editor, Bob Tholkes, using e-mail rjtholkes@gmail.com.

THE MONTH IN 19cBB

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoogroup now and then during the month of November.

DISCOVERIES

Town Ball, from the Clipper of July 31, 1858

John Thorn posted a description of how town ball was played in Philadelphia, sent to the *New York Clipper* by (apparently) a member of the Excelsior Club of that city. John Zinn noted that town ball was still being played in that area in 1863. Richard Hershberger sent extensive comments and traded information about the reported 1863 game with John Z.

Baseball of American Origin, Declared in 1856

John Thorn posted a note of 1856 in the *New York Clipper*, before Henry Chadwick's time with the paper, opining that the game was American in origin. Frank Ceresi asked his opinion of the identity of the writer; John mentioned publisher Frank queen and sports editor William Bray as candidates. Bob Tholkes posted a game account of 1855 in the *New-York Atlas* and inquired about possible authorship; John Thorn replied, guessing prominent Gotham Club member W. H. Van Cott, who had played in the game.

An 1855 Baseball Convention?

John Thorn's post of an 1855 item about an interclub meeting held in New York City turned out to be an item John had previously posted two years ago, but drew a number of replies anyway, the previous posting being beyond most people's memories, except that of Richard Hershberger, who sent the link to the original. Eric Miklich sent a summary of his research on early baseball meetings. The earlier date seemed logical to Peter Mancuso; interclub play was increasing as new clubs were founded. Craig Waff sent a list of the clubs which had played games by the end of the 1855 season. Richard posted a summary of the game's development in the period 1851-1855 indicating the motives for the 1855 meeting, and his conclusion that the meeting lacked the backing to produce at that point the major changes adopted at the much better-known 1857 meeting.

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2012 VINTAGE BASE BALL ASSOCIATION MEETING

Ed Achorn, Tom Sheiber, David Nemec, and Bob Tholkes are all engaged to speak at the 2012 Vintage Base Ball Association annual convention at Bethpage, Long Island, on Saturday, March 31. See <http://www.vbba.org/Members>

/Conference.htm for convention information.

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150 YEARS AGO

from the pages of the New York Sunday Mercury

December 8, 1861

BASE BALL IN THE ARMY.-- We are glad to learn that the commanders of regiments encourage the playing of base ball by their men, as will be seen by the following communication:

To the Editors of the Sunday Mercury:

I send you inclosed the score of a match of base ball that was played on Monday (25th ult.) between the Twenty-fourth regiment, N. Y. S. V., and the Fourteenth Regiment, N. Y. S. M., which resulted in a complete victory for the Brooklyn boys. The day was cold and disagreeable, but the crowd turned out in large numbers to witness the match, and seemed to take great interest in the sport. All our officers are greatly in favor of outdoor sport, and encourage it greatly. The match was made to commence to at 10 A. M., and we were all on the ground precisely, where we found the Thirtieth Regiment, N. Y. S. V., out on their morning drill; but the colonel generously took his men off the ground, and allowed us to proceed with our game. We expect to play a match with the Thirtieth Regiment soon, and only hope the result will be more

closely contested than this one, as the Twenty-fourth gave up the game on the fifth inning. The playing of van Pelt, Brown, Brockett, Travis, and Snedicker, of the Fourteenth, was very creditable; and also that of Shepard, Phillips, and Walrath, on the part of the Twenty-fourth Regiment, who made all the runs.

14TH REGIMENT.	O.	R.
Brown	2	3
Van Pelt	3	2
Travis	2	3
Brockett	2	3
Young	2	2
Snedicker	1	3
Bennett	1	3
Norris	2	2
Long	0	4

24TH REGIMENT.	O.	R.
Shepard	0	1
Crowell	3	0
Phillips	1	2
W. Bowne	3	0
M. Bowne	0	0
R. Bowne	3	0
Wright	3	0
Kingsley	2	1
Walrath	0	0

INNINGS	1	2	3	4	5
14th Regi.	3	6	3	12	2-26
24th Regi.	2	0	1	1	0-4

(advertisement)

JOHN C. WHITING,
87 FULTON STREET,
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