

# Originals.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research  
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## THE MONTH IN 19cBB

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

### DISCOVERIES

#### **1860 game pictures?**

Bob Tholkes posted a possible source, new to him, for pictures of an 1860 game Mark Fimoff identified the setting as that of a picture in Eric Caren's *Baseball Extra*, scanned it, and posted the file. Craig Waff recalled seeing the picture online, and posted a link. John Thorn remembered seeing the image from the game in question, the first of a memorable series of games between the Atlantic and Excelsior Clubs of Brooklyn, in a private collection. A discussion of the photo among Bob, Craig, Mark, Peter Mancuso, and Tom Shieber ensued.

#### **more on Creighton's compensation**

Still exploring the *Atlas*, Richard sent an item defending players transferring clubs from automatic suspicion of having been paid. Eric Miklich, Craig Waff, Richard, J. Lobdell, and Bob Tholkes posted

opinions and evidence on the subject.

#### ***Before the Mills Commission***

John Thorn posted a brief article essay from Connie Mack's *How To Play Baseball* (1903) giving a history of the game with an emphasis on its roots in Philadelphia.

#### ***an early hint of professionalism***

Richard Hershberger sent an 1859 *New-York Atlas* item in which the Monument Club of New York defends itself against an accusation of luring players from another club.

#### ***Mechanics of Worcester vs Clippers of Sturbridge 1859***

Richard Hershberger sent a game account of a Massachusetts-Rules game of 1859 and speculated on its lessons for how the game was played.

#### ***Baseball in 1768 Dictionary***

On December 2nd, David Block posted a new major find: a definition of "Baseball" (one word) in an English dictionary of 1768. The dictionary also defined "base" as synonymous with "baseball", and not as prisoner's base, as has often been assumed possible. Christopher Green posted a note that the publisher, the Society for Gentlemen,

published the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in the same year. George Thompson, using the same source (ECCO) supplied a general list of the games named in the dictionary. David responded that baseball's place in the book speaks to its widespread use as a term.

## originals WICKET REVIVAL NORTH OF BOSTON

*from Origins Committee  
Chair Larry McCray:*

As far as is known, no one had played a game of wicket in about four of Brian Sheehy's lifespans, but that didn't stop him from organizing three brisk contests this past October.

Brian, who still is sorting out whether he loves history or sports best, teaches a course on "Sports of the Past" at North Andover High School north of Boston. On October 6 three of his morning classes split into sides and played the game that seemed to have been the game of choice in western New England until the New York Game swept away all rivals in the 1860s. Brian fashioned some of the needed equip-

ment, including a heavy curved bat and low [a few inches] and long [six-feet] wickets/goals. The games were played on one end of a football practice field, with wickets placed at the 5 and 30-yardlines. The players followed the playing rules used in Bristol, CT in the 1850s. We know of no wicket play since a throw-back game played in 1903.

The high schoolers attacked the old game – which may have split off from English cricket as early as 1700 and then evolved in the U.S. – with youthful curiosity and gusto. They experimented with various batting styles and strategies [learning that backward-hitting is harder and riskier than it looks] and trying different fielding deployments. The classes had been introduced to rounders and the Massachusetts game and stool-ball earlier. In the coming spring, Brian is considering a more public wicket demonstration, one that may lead to the crowning of an official new World Wicket Champion, a team that would thereby receive the little-discussed Proto-ball Trophy for Wicket Supremacy.

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## TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

### ANOTHER BASS BALL REFERENCE

In previous issues of *Originals* I've written about bass ball. Recently I have run across several more

references, including this one from Massachusetts. In his 1842 *Sketches of New England*, Nathaniel Shatswell Dodge (under his pen name John Carver) wrote about a very large elm in the village common: "Beneath it the boys play their games of cricket and bass, and have played them an hundred years;..." Dodge did not specify which town in Massachusetts he was describing, but unless he was indulging in hyperbole, his reference would date bass ball (or base ball) back to the 1730s and 1740s, perhaps some more evidence for John Thorn's theories that base ball appeared in Massachusetts around 1735.[Nathaniel Shatswell Dodge], *Sketches of New England, or Memories of the Country* (New York: E. French, 1842), p. 177

### MINISTER LAMENTS BALL PLAY ON THE SABBATH

Baptist minister Ray Potter stated in his 1829 memoir that in his neighborhood of Cranston, RI, in 1805 (when he was about ten years old) the Sabbath "was almost wholly disregarded," and that his neighborhood "was made a place of rendezvous by persons from different parts of the town, to assemble for recreation, such as ball-playing, and the like." Potter joined in this heathenish play but later regretted it. [Ray Potter], *Memoirs of the Life and Religious Experience of Ray Potter, Minister of the Gospel, Pawtucket* (Providence: H.H.

Brown, Printer, 1829), pp. 19-20

### SPRING AND FALL BALL PLAY IN CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In his 1856 history of the town of Concord, NH, Nathaniel Bouton wrote of sports in the "early times" (imprecise but probably the 18th and early 19th centuries): "The amusements and recreations of the young men were mostly of the athletic kind. 'Playing ball' was always practiced, as it still is, in the spring and fall." Nathaniel Bouton, *The History of Concord, from the First Grant in 1725 to the Organization of City Government in 1853* (Concord, New Hampshire: Benning W. Sanborn, 1856), p. 535

### BEEKMANTOWN BALL PLAY IN THE 1830S

In 1834 a Rev. Phineas Bailey and the church board of elders in this northern New York logging town stated "that playing ball is an unprofitable waist [sic] of time and ought to be reprov'd." It's unclear whether they enforced the resolution or just complained. Philip L. White, *Beekmantown, New York: Forest Frontier to Farm Community* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 129  
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