

Originals.

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CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO Originals

John Thorn noted that the "The Park" referred to in the Tom Altherr item in the February *Originals*, "THE COLUMBIA BASEBALL CLUB IN 1853 OR 1854" was City Hall Park.

HONK IF YOU'VE SEEN THIS. John also forwarded, under the title "I Am No Longer The Only One To Have Seen This", a link to a close-up of a 16th-century Bruegels work in which is shown, apparently, "a family enjoying a jolly Shrove Tuesday game of throwing sticks at a tied-up goose."

THE MONTH IN 19cBB

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoogroup during the past month of February to pursue a number of topics of interest.

DISCOVERIES

"three corner cat"

Darryl Brock sent a link to an 1840s Missouri reference to three corner cat as a schoolyard game, and asked if it equated to the game called "three old cat". John Thorn confirmed, citing a reference in the 1887 William Wheaton in-

terview. Richard Hersberger posted a critique of the Wheaton interview as a reliable source. Craig Waff added a 2007 19c posting about the risk of injury involved in the game, and Deb Shattuck asked if the reference mentioned the gender of the players. By way of Monica Nucciarone, Randall Brown sent his belief that the "cat" games were to base ball what the game of wicket was to cricket.

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TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

AN 1805 BAT AND BALL GAME IN

PENNSYLVANIA

Recollecting his life, Pennsylvania journalist John Binns recalled a bat and ball game in 1805: "On Saturday, November 2, 1805, while I was in the public ball-alley, in Sunbury, with a yellow pine bat in my right hand, tossing a ball against the wall, waiting for Major Charles Maclay to play a game...." He then describes the approach of a stranger who provoked a nasty altercation with Binns. The ball game he was playing may have been some variation of fives, but he clearly specified having a bat, a yellow pine one at

that. Yellow pine is a slightly harder wood than other pines. There's no way of knowing whether or not this was a bat and ball game with bases or run-scoring, but the basic information may suggest a resemblance to the types of barn ball, which could involve as few as two players. Also, the reference to a "public ball alley" is interesting. Did the municipality promote recreation? Public, as opposed to private? Many ball alleys from this era were for bowling, but this one clearly accommodated a sort of ball game using a wall. John Binns, *Recollections of the Life of John Binns* (Philadelphia: pvt. ptg., 1854), p. 185

BALL GAMES IN LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA AND LEESBURG, VIRGINIA IN THE 1840s

In the early 1840s when he was seven years old, the family of William Riddle moved from Lancaster to Leesburg, Virginia. Riddle lamented that he had been "too young to catch on to the numerous other games then in vogue among the larger boys in the village of Leesburg, as well as over in Lancaster" where games had continued "with uninterrupted regularity." Among the several games were "corner and town-ball." Writing in 1910,

Riddle then chided boys of that day who would rather sit in a cold grandstand watching baseball than presumably play their own games. William Riddle, *Cherished Memories of Old Lancaster --Town and Shire* (Lancaster, PA: Intelligencer Printing House, 1910), pp. 2-23

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150 YEARS AGO

*from the pages of the New
York Sunday Mercury*

*March 3, 1861
(correspondence)*

*NEW YORK, Feb. 27, 1861
To the Editors of the Sun-
day Mercury:*

Seeing in one of your late papers that the Junior Base Ball Convention had ordered a silver ball for junior clubs attached to the Association to play for, I would ask, why not let other junior clubs not in the Convention compete for it as well? There are some good clubs not in the Association-- Unknown, of Harlem ; Champion, of Hoboken ; Uncas, of New York, and others. Will they be allowed to compete for the ball? A JUNIOR.

We presume not. There is no reason why they should be allowed to compete for a ball for which they have not contributed a cent. There is an opportunity offered to all good junior clubs to join the Association ; and then they will be entitled to all the rights and privileges of others. The contest for the prize ball will be confined to

clubs which form part of the organization ; and those will keep the possessor of the ball sufficiently busy without going beyond the organization.

March 17, 1861

BALLS, SHOES, ETC.-Mr. John C. Whiting, of the Excelsior Club of South Brooklyn, is prepared to furnish everything pertaining to base ball and cricket. He has an improvement on spikes, for players' shoes, which is worthy of particular attention. Answering all the purposes of spikes, so far as preventing slipping, they avoid any injury to the feet of those players against whom runners may come in contact.

March 31, 1861

The weather now appears to be fast settling down to something like consistency ; and if nothing extraordinary happens in the way of a change of temperature, the ground will soon be in good order for ball playing and other outdoor sports. There is every reason to believe that the ensuing season will be a lively one in base ball circles. The senior clubs are holding their annual elections, and getting their houses, bases, and bats, in order ; and the junior clubs have made arrangements for a series of spirited contests for the championship and the silver ball.

We hope to see all the clubs getting to work in good season this year ; and we shall expect to witness a general improvement in playing at matches, consequent upon the reg-

ular attendance of members at the grounds of their respective clubs on practice days. The best players will get somewhat rusty without due practice ; and we would impress upon the attention of first nine members that unless they divest themselves of the idea which many of them possess, that they can play well enough, and need no further practice, they will ere long find themselves displaced by other less conceited players. The game of base ball has not yet reached that degree of perfection in playing which we hope to see it realize. Several very fine games were witnessed last season ; but we expect to see even those surpassed, when players, by a constant and regular practice of the game, urged on by a desire to excel, exhibit on the field that care and attention to the game, and that self-possession and coolness, which characterize the adept, and which are so necessary to that perfection in playing, all should aim to reach. The success which attended the Excelsior Club last season, was due to the regular drilling and practice of its players. Let other clubs profit by their example ; and we shall witness a decided improvement in base ball matches the ensuing season.

Send comments,
questions, and other
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