

# Nineteenth Century Notes

## NEWSLETTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMITTEE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

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### BIG LEAGUE BASE BALL COMES TO CONNECTICUT

By DAVID ARCIDIACONO

A MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM in Connecticut? Never happen, right? Well, actually it already did happen, and in three Connecticut cities, no less: Hartford New Haven, and Middletown. Surprisingly, it was tiny Middletown and their beloved Mansfields that led the way.

It was the summer of 1866 when a ball club was first established at Middletown's Douglas Pump Company. The factory owner's son, sixteen-year-old Ben Douglas, Jr., organized the team. He originally called the nine the Douglas Club, but quickly changed the name to Mansfields in honor of General Joseph Mansfield, a Middletown native and Civil War hero.

Despite losing their first match by a score of 50 to 1, the Mansfields showed steady improvement, and in 1870 they were voted amateur champions of Connecticut. It was in that year that they also acquired an enclosed field which, for the first time, allowed them to charge admission to games.

Prior to the 1872 season even-thing was in place for the Mansfields' continued operation as amateurs, and Ben Douglas was busy arranging games for the coming season. He contacted Harry Wright, manager of the professional Boston club, in hopes of luring the popular Red Stockings back to Middletown. Wright curtly advised Douglas that the Red Stockings would only come back if the gate receipts were better than the previous year, "when the money did not come up to the expectations we were led to indulge in."

Having been burned once, Wright didn't trust Douglas' rosy promises or large crowds, and insisted that Douglas guarantee an agreeable sum of money. Stung by this harsh reply, the young Douglas attempted to play hard ball with the experienced veteran, brazenly informing Wright that if the Mansfields must guarantee a minimum take, then Boston must do likewise. Wright simply laughed at this idea, declaring that if a game between the two clubs depends upon a mutual guarantee, then "there is not much likelihood of any being played" With the most famous nine in the country, Wright didn't need to comply with any conditions Douglas might try to impose.

Wright concluded his message with the fateful suggestion that would put Middletown on the baseball map. He advised Douglas that if the Mansfields truly wanted to play professional clubs, then they should pay the \$10 entry fee and join the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players. If the Mansfields were admitted to the league, the professional clubs would then have no choice but to play them,

Inspired by this novel idea, Douglas wasted no time in gathering his club for a team meeting. He laid out his proposal, and then called for a vote on whether to join the pro league.

Now the Mansfields were certainly a good amateur team, but joining the professional league was a huge leap for the small-town

club. While it was true that occasionally they had acquitted themselves reasonably well against some pro teams, the bottom line was that they had failed to defeat a single one.

Besides the very real concerns about their talent, Douglas was also undoubtedly aware that Middletown's small population wouldn't guarantee the club's financial survival. With only 11,000 residents, Middletown's population paled in comparison to other National Association cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

Despite the rather daunting obstacles, the Mansfields boldly voted to authorize Douglas to send the \$10 entry fee in to the League Championship Committee. Unfortunately, the Championship Committee didn't move as quickly as the Mansfields. After receiving Middletown's entry fee, the committee sat on it awhile, leaving Douglas to wonder if the daring proposition would be accepted. Things looked bleak when Harry Wright reported that many members of the committee had voiced opposition to Middletown's entry.

Despite any resistance, though, the simple truth was that by tendering the \$10 fee, Middletown had fulfilled the National Association's sole requirement for entry. Bound by their own rules, the Championship Committee was powerless to keep the Mansfields out. Yes, as improbable as it was, Middletown, Connecticut, was now a major league city!

Once the immediate excitement of being allowed into the league subsided Douglas had to face the harsh reality that his club desperately needed to upgrade its roster. Their talent was sufficient for phasing the likes of the Hartford Gaulladet deaf-mute club, but more skilled ballplayers were required to have any hope of beating the pros.

The Mansfields did manage to add a solid young catcher

by the name of John Clapp and future Hall of Fame catcher-shortstop Jim (Orator) O'Rourke. Despite these additions, the Mansfields were frightfully young. In fact, their *oldest* player was younger than the average league player. Nonetheless, the inexperienced Mansfields were about to leap headlong into professional baseball.

Throughout the year the Mansfields put up a fascinating and often comical struggle for survival against big-city teams,

sparse attendance, scheduling fiascos, and crooked umpires. Alas, they could not remain solvent for the entire season, and on August 14 the Mansfields closed the books on their one glorious season in the sun.

*(DAVID ARCIDIACONO'S complete history of the Mansfield baseball club, Middletown's Season in the Sun is available from the author. It will be reviewed in the next issue of NCN).*

## BASEBALL' S NINETEENTH CENTURY BEST

THIS YEAR. celebrating the best of the twentieth century is the thing to do, but by next year all this *fin de siècle* furor will have blown over and we can get back to reminding the baseball world that our game has a nineteenth century history too. Earlier this year. in the spirit of celebrating baseball' s best we of SABR' s Nineteenth Century Committee chose the best of the nineteenth century, and here they are. Somewhat surprisingly, no one was a unanimous choice. Cap Anson led the player balloting, with 106 votes from the 113 ballots submitted, and Henry Chadwick led the contributors balloting with 109 votes from 111 ballots.

Note that these results do not rank players and contributors. Voters were asked only to choose their top 40 players and top 10 contributors, not to say who was the best, second best, and so on. It is inaccurate, for example, to say that the Nineteenth Century Committee selected Dan Brouthers as the sixth best player of the nineteenth century. We did not; we selected him simply as one of the top forty best. Ranking the best players might be an interesting thing to do, but that' s a job for another poll.

### TOP 40 PLAYERS (113 ballots cast)

1 Cap Anson (106)  
2T King Kelly (104)  
2T Cy Young(104)  
4T Ed Delahantv (101)  
4T Buck Ewing(101)  
6 Dan Brouthers (100)  
7 Charlie Radbourn (97)  
8T Roger Connor (94)  
8T Billy Hamilton (94)  
10 Willie Keeler (93)  
11T John Clarkson (90)  
11T John M. Ward (90)  
13 Tim Keefe (89)  
14 Kid Nichols (88)  
15 Sam Thompson (87)  
16 Amos Rusie (86)  
17 George Davis (83)  
18 Pete Browning (80)  
19 Jesse Surkett (78)  
20T Hugh Duffs (75)  
20T Jim Gahin (75)  
20T Bid McPhee (75)  
23T Jim O' Rourke (73)  
23T Al Spalding (73)  
25 Mickey Welch (71)  
26 Harry Stovey (69)  
27 George Wright (68)  
28 Deacon White (63)  
29 John McGraw (62)  
30 Hugh Jennings (60)  
31 Tony Mullane (56)  
32 Jack Glasscock (53)  
33 Bob Caruthers (51)

34 Jake Becklev (50)  
35 Bill Dahlen (48)  
36 Jimmy Collins (46)  
37T Charlie Comiskey (41)  
37T Joe Kelley (41)  
39 Tip O' eill (40)  
40 Ross Barnes (39)

### TOP 8 CONTRIBUTORS (111 ballots cast)

1 Henry Chadwick (109)  
2T Al Spalding (96)  
2T Harry Wright (96)  
4 Alex Cartwright (90)  
5 John M. Ward (82)  
6 William Hulbert (66)  
7 Ned Hanlon (61)  
8 Al Reach (56)

### THE REST OF THE PLAYERS

41T Fred Clarke (37)  
41T Jimmy Ryan (37)  
43 George Van Haltren (36)  
44 Clark Griffith (35)  
45 Jim Creighton (34)  
46 Cal MeVey (33)  
47 Paul Hines (31)  
48 Candy Cummings (29)  
49 Dickey Pearce (28)  
50T Charlie Bennett (27)  
50T Wilbert Robinson (27)  
50T Mike Tiernan (27)  
53 Fred Dunlap (26)  
54 Cupid Childs (25)  
55 Bobby Matthews (24)

56TDummy Hoy (23)  
56T Herman Long (23)  
56T Hardv Richardson (23)  
56T Joe Start (23)  
60T Tommv Bond (22)  
60T Jim McCormick (22)  
62T Dave Orr (20)  
62T Ned Williamson (20)  
64T Lave Cross (19)  
64T George Gore (19)  
64T Guy Hecker (19)  
64T Tom McCarthy (19)  
68 Jack Stivetts (15)  
69T Deacon McGuire (17)  
69T Fred Tenney (17)  
71T Dave Foutz (16)  
71T Frank Grant (16)  
71T Arlie Latham (16)  
74 Fred Pfeffer (15)  
75T Charlie Buffinton (14)  
75T Ed McKean (14)  
77T Larry Corcoran (13)  
77T Dick McBride (13)  
77T Lip Pike (13)  
77T Will White (13)  
81T Charley Jones (12)  
81T Silver King (12)  
83T Mike Griffin (11)  
83T Levi Meyerle (11)  
83T Chief Zimmer (11)  
86 Bobby Lowe (10)  
87 Elmer Smith (9)  
88 Denny Lyons (7)  
89T Nig Cuppy (6)  
89T Billy Nash (6)  
91T John Clements (5)

91T Charlie Ferguson (5)  
91T Jim Whitney (5)  
94 Bill Joyce (4)  
95T Duke Farrell (3)  
95T Sadie McMahon (3)  
95T Kip Selbach (3)  
98T Henry Larkin (2)  
98T Pop Snyder (2)  
100T Frank Dwyer (1)  
100T Bill Hutchison (1)  
100T Jocko Milligan (1)

### THE REST OF THE CONTRIBUTORS

9T Frank Sele (42)  
9T George Wright (42)  
11 Al Spink(38)  
12T Doc Adams (35)  
12T Chris Von der Ahe (35)  
14 Francis Richter (33)  
15T A.G. Mills (13)  
15T Jim Mutrie (13)  
17T Frank Bancroft (12)  
17T J. T. Brush (12)  
17T William Cammever (12)  
20 John Gaffney (11)  
21T O. P. Caylor (10)  
21T Nick Young (10)  
23T Denny McKnight (8)  
23T Ted Sullivan (8)  
25 Henry Lucas (7)  
26 William Rankin (4)  
27T Charles H. Byrne (3)  
27T John B. Day (3)

## GEORGE DAVIS: FROM OBSCURITY TO THE HALL OF FAME

By WILLIAM F. LAMB

OF ALL THE PLAYERS ENSHRINED IN COOPERSTOWN, the one about whom the least is known is George Davis. Notwithstanding a long and prominent turn-of-the-century career in both New York and Chicago, Davis avoided publicity during his heyday and languished in obscurity for decades after his playing days ended. His passing went unnoticed by the public. Even his surviving relatives, with whom George apparently kept in little contact, were not informed of his death. Baseball did not learn of his death in 1940 until 28 years after that event.

George Davis remained forgotten until Hall of Fame historian Lee Allen took up the search for him in the 1960s. Allen's long and dogged quest to find out what had happened to Davis is recounted in Bill James' *The Politics of Glory*. Suffice it here to say that Allen ultimately secured a copy of Davis death certificate in July 1968, almost 28 years after Davis' silent passing. Unfortunately, Allen did not much pursue the Davis story after learning the time and place of death, and George Davis rapidly returned to obscurity.

The revival of interest in Davis began in earnest in the late 1980s. My interest in Davis was triggered by citation of Davis and Herman Long as the best unrecognized players of the 1890s in *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* (1986). JOSEPH M. OVERFIELD'S brief biography of Davis in *Nineteenth Century Stars* (1989) argued Davis worthiness for the HOF. And the publication, also in 1989, of the first edition of *Total Baseball* with its rarified total player rating of the long-forgotten Davis-in the top 30 all time and higher than about 85 percent of the HOF players-generated renewed scholarly interest in Davis.

Appreciation of Davis the player as well as a rare and not especially flattering assessment of Davis the man were featured in *July 2, 1903*, Mike Sowell's splendid 1992 book on Ed Delahanty. The signal event in the Davis revival, however, may have been a lengthy front-page feature on Davis written by *Daily Gazette* (Schenectady, NY.) sportswriter Steve Amedio in April 1993. The Amedio article stimulated considerable local interest in Davis (a native of nearby Cohoes), led to the renaming of the Northeast New York SABR chapter in Davis' honor, and birthed a nascent George Davis for Hall of Fame movement.

The Davis HOF movement gained impetus with the 1994 publication of Bill James' *The Politics of Glory*, which rated Davis as easily the best player eligible for Cooperstown who had not yet been enshrined. The following years saw Davis highlighted in a PBS documentary on upstate New York ballplayers produced by SABR president DAVID PIETRUSZA, and in my cover story on Davis in *The National Pastime*. The Davis HOF campaign, spearheaded by Cohoes city historian Walt Lipka, culminated in Davis selection by the Veterans Committee in March 1998. Fifty-eight years after his passing, baseball justice was finally bestowed on George Davis.

### RUMINATIONS ON GEORGE DAVIS

As a player. George Davis was exceptional. As a fielder, Davis started as a superb defensive outfielder and finished his career as arguably the finest fielding shortstop of his generation. He had a strong and accurate arm and was fleet afoot. Offensively, he hit for average and with extra-base power from both sides of the plate. On top of his abilities. Davis was smart. A neat summary of George Davis the ballplayer is provided in John McGraw's 925 memoir. In selecting Davis as his all-time AL shortstop. McGraw stated that Davis "excelled as a batter, was an expert shortstop. wonderful base runner and an exceptionally quick thinker." Equation to Robin Yount in terms of ability, versatility, longevity, temperament and baseball intellect does not fall far from the mark except Davis was

the better player. In fact, aside from Honus Wagner, with whom no shortstop can be favorably compared, a serious case can be made for George Davis as the best all-around shortstop in major league history.

As a field leader on the professional level, George Davis was a failure. He embodies the cliché about great players making bad managers. Although the New York Giants of 1900-01 were a sad outfit, Davis' other teams, the 1895 Giants and the 1910 Des Moines Western League squad, had plenty of talent but fared poorly under Davis' command. Although Davis was clearly an astute baseball man, he appears to have lacked the interpersonal skills needed for managerial success. Although the evidence is fragmentary, Davis appears not to have been much of a disciplinarian, and he was unable to inspire either loyalty or respect from many of his charges.

As a man, Davis remains enigmatic. Both his contemporaries and modern-day researchers agree that Davis was both intelligent and articulate. Little else can be said about him with any degree of assurance, and few have tried. Only Mike Sowell in his Delahanty book attempts a personality profile of Davis. To Sowell, Davis is "a strange man" who was not trusted by fellow players. But the evidence on which this assessment is based (and I spoke with Sowell on this point) is meager, consisting of little more than the treachery that Sowell ascribes to Davis in the ouster of Buck Ewing as Giants manager during the 1900 season, and Davis' inability to get along with an envious blowhard like Dirty Jack Doyle.

That Davis had ambition-one doesn't get to be a manager in New York at age 24 without it-is plain enough. But to make a character judgment largely on the basis of the Ewing firing (and the actual nature of Davis' role therein is disputed) seems tenuous. If a single incident is the true reflection of a man's character, then Davis' genuinely heroic conduct during a 1900 tenement fire rescue and his modest declination of credit afterward make the man a paragon. In all probability, the true George Davis probably lies somewhere between villain and saint. But with so much about the man remaining unknown, more than that cannot safely be said, except that Davis doubtless led an interesting life, and that it is a shame we do not know more about it.

*(The above article is adapted from Bill Lamb's "Research Notes and Commentary on George Davis," a 9-page research memorandum that contains much previously unpublished minutiae and other information on Davis. The memorandum credits SABR's Joe McGillen, of Philadelphia, and Cohoes, N.Y., city historian Walt Lipka with most of the recent discoveries about Davis' life. The complete memorandum is available from the SABR Research*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Play for a Kingdom. By THOMAS DYJA Harcourt, Brace & Co..  
New York NY. 1997. 416 pages.

Reviewed by JAMES TOOTLE.

Set in Virginia in Spring 1864, *Play for a Kingdom* is a well-written, thoroughly researched, and highly readable Civil War novel with an original and captivating theme: baseball. Central to the narrative is a series of baseball games between soldiers from the 14th Brooklyn and the 12th Alabama, who mysteriously and repeatedly meet each other while assigned to picket duty during lulls in battle. This baseball theme sets *Play for a Kingdom* apart from other accounts, fictional and non-fictional of the Civil War.

The matches between nines of war-weary veterans in tattered blue and gym uniforms capture the attention of those interested in the early days of baseball. Surrounded by disease, death, and the painful memories of fallen comrades, the combatants see the games as a welcome respite from the dangers and carnage of the conflict around them.

The game action shows that the author possesses a good understanding of the terminology, rules, and customs of the game in the 1860s. Unskilled players are referred to as "muffins," soldiers around the campfire argue the relative merits of the Excelsiors and the Eckfords, popular Brooklyn clubs of the day, and discuss the untimely passing of Jimmy Creighton. Before the first game begins, the participants decide if they will catch the ball on the bound for an out or if they will play the "fly game," which was gaining popularity among the better clubs back home. During a game there is a description of a hitter who lacks self confidence thinking, "he had to admit that he wasn't a Leggett when it came to the bat," a reference to Excelsior catcher J. B. Leggett, a prominent hitter of that era.

It might have been enlightening had the author mentioned whether he had any evidence of Union and Confederate soldiers actually playing matches during the war. We know games occurred between units of the same army and among those held in prison camps, but are left to wonder about North-South matches.

Throughout the book it is the game of baseball that provides the setting for the principal characters to display their courage, honor, and humanity. Baseball fans of any era can readily identify with two members of the 14th Brooklyn: one who keeps a wooden bat in his bedroll and his friend who carries a baseball in his pack. While the war-related portions of the book are powerful, the baseball passages are especially eloquent, invoking the timeless mystique of the game. One of the members of the 14th Brooklyn, far from home, shares the following thoughts as he gazes upon a clearing in the woods just large and level enough for a game:

As Lyman looked across the field, he could picture only one thing—the Excelsiors' grounds on Court Street with its same expanse of clean grass and exact limits. A ball field was a world within a world, too, he thought, with its own rules related in some ways to the rules of life, but a world that offered immediate rewards and penalties. No one had to tell a ballplayer he was doing well or not: if he

performed well and played as a gentleman, the fruits were evident. As Lyman saw it, there was only one thing to do on a spring afternoon on a grassy field and it was a very ordinary thing; what any man would do on a field like this with his friends. He dug into his knapsack and took out his baseball. There was consolation in a game of catch. {p.77}

Mr. Dyja has penned a dramatic and suspenseful novel rich in detail. *Play for a Kingdom* provides an authentic look back at baseball in the context of the Civil War. It is no surprise that it is the game of baseball that brings out the best in the participants and represents a peaceful and humane contrast to the horrors of the war.

*The Tented Field: A History of Cricket in America.* By TOM MELVILLE. Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH 43403. 1998. vii+280 pages. Photographs, glossary of cricket terms, notes, bibliographic essay, appendix, index. Cloth. \$48.95; paper. \$19.95.

Reviewed by DEAN A. SULLIVAN.

Given the increasing attention paid to the history of baseball by scholars and other dedicated researchers, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the history of the ball game which, for a time, exceeded baseball in popularity, and which trained many of its earliest players. Harold Seymour and David Quentin Voigt almost ignore cricket, only mentioning it in reference to the 1874 and 1888-89 tours and to the seeming inevitability of its demise once enough Americans became exposed to baseball. Melville's book is devoted to the premise, which he convincingly proves, that the "triumph" of baseball was not inevitable, and that the history of baseball is not complete without a more thorough examination of the evolution of cricket alongside that of baseball.

The 149 pages of text concentrate almost exclusively on cricket in the nineteenth century, when the sport was at its zenith in this country. From the 1840s through the 1860s cricket and baseball were both popular sports, especially (but not only) in and around northeastern cities. Many of baseball's best players regularly played cricket during this period, and cricket clubs sprung up all over the country. One of the strengths of the book is Melville's use of dozens of newspaper accounts of games and clubs, which reminds us that for a time the popularity of cricket was widespread. He makes further use of his newspaper research in a 58-page appendix in which he lists, by state and city, printed references to hundreds of these clubs.

Melville discusses at length the various reasons why cricket failed to maintain its popularity after the Civil War. For the most part he accepts the arguments of Melvin Adelman, one of few baseball historians (along with George Kirsch) who have also studied cricket, that important factors included the failure of cricket to adjust its rules for the American audience, its reluctance to embrace professionalism or to abandon its setting within elite social clubs, and the lack of a ball-playing tradition in America in which a relatively slow-moving sport like cricket could thrive. Melville points out that influential cricket officials in Philadelphia (the

center of American cricket) attempted to make certain concessions in these areas, but that the very nature of cricket was- from the beginning, antithetical to the quicker lifestyle present in the United States.

Even though this book was published by a university press, the text is, by and large, intelligible. Melville is interested in tackling the various scholarly theories relating to the growth of ball games in nineteenth century America and to the demise of cricket in particular, but as a cricketer himself, he is most interested in describing the history of his game as it grew alongside baseball. I strongly recommend this book to all members of the committee, especially those who belong to town ball and other early baseball clubs. If you want to be truly faithful to the history of your game, you'd better practice defending your wicket and taking out the stumps.

*Big Leagues: Professional Baseball, Football and Basketball in National Memory.* By STEPHEN FOX. William Morrow and Co.. New York. 1994. 522 pages.

Reviewed by PETER MORRIS.

Warren Goldstein argued that early baseball had two histories-linear and cyclical-and it is the latter that interests Stephen Fox, an independent scholar. In this energetic and wide-ranging study, he extends Goldstein's cyclical pattern to include not only the entire history of baseball, but also the more recent development of professional football and basketball.

Fox describes how the initial appeal of all three sports derived from the free, rapid movement of the ball and running and jumping of the players. However, as each sport made the transition to professionalism, scientific styles of play came into vogue which discouraged or even legislated against too much activity. The sports became slow, low-scoring and landbound. The 1920s and '30s saw a rediscovery of the airborne elements of the game, with the emergence of the home run, the forward pass and the jump shot. These innovations were initially met with resistance and hostility from the sports' establishment, but their appeal to the fans was too great and eventually rules were changed to accommodate them. Racial integration consolidated these changes, with blacks bringing greater speed and a more dynamic style of play.

On first glance this pattern could be described as progress, but there is an important distinction. The steady movement towards a scientific style of play was actually overthrown by a revolution which restored a more primitive style. This revolution initiated a cyclical pattern which has characterized the sports ever since. Fox shows that three "national teams," the Yankees, Packers and Celtics, were more borrowers from the past than trailblazers. He accordingly describes sports fans as Luddites, athletic life as a perpetual childhood and sports as a whole as an escape from reality.

Fox is not content merely to explain this thesis, and actually spends surprisingly little time on analysis, a facet of this book which may disconcert some readers. While his work suggests comparisons to Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the only Kuhn he mentions is Bowie. Fox's affection for sports is dearly genuine and, unlike some academics who write on sports, he believes that "the historian's task is to hold the implications down, for the moment, and to look at the sporting evidence on its own

merits... Primary empirical facts must be weighed more heavily than secondary speculations. Stay close to the game. Leave the discussion till later."

Fox heeds his own dictum, and accordingly illustrates his points with a wealth of anecdotes. He is a gifted storyteller, who is willing to wander from the thesis when a good tale is in sight (perhaps subconsciously mirroring the escapism he sees in sports). Any frustration such diversions might occasion is compensated for when he unearths such obscure gems as a letter by Tigers' owner Frank Navin to a holdout stating "you can report or not, as you see fit. You needn't mind suggesting to me how to run the affairs of the Detroit club, as when I want suggestions I will go to someone that I think knows his business."

The section on nineteenth century baseball is 52 pages long, and, while carefully researched, it understandably breaks little new ground. Two of his contentions do seem original to me. Fox argues that a club formed in Rochester, N.Y., in the 1820s deserves greater attention. While the rules they were playing by were not innovative, he points out that the simple fact that they were the first club of adults to play ball games makes them significant. Fox also makes a persuasive case that Arthur P. Gorman has been undervalued as a major contributor to baseball's development.

Nineteenth century baseball has more than its share of land mines for the historian to stumble over, but I detected no significant errors in *Big Leagues*. One can always find a few things to quibble with: George Wright was large, not medium-sized, by the standards of 1867; the Yankees were still officially the Highlanders in the first decade of this century, although many newspapers were already calling them the Yankees; the fly rule was *adopted* in 1864, though it went into effect in 1865; he includes a quotation from Duncan Curry on Alexander Cartwright's contributions to the Knickerbockers without exploring the problematic history of that statement. But these are nice points at best, and even Fox's bizarre characterization of Pete Rose as one of the best defensive players ever does not diminish one's respect for the attention to detail in this painstakingly documented work.

A more serious flaw is the one-sided portrayal of the athlete's life in chapters titled "Ballplaying Life" and "Big Money." In these sections, Fox compiles a long and familiar list of the transgressions of immature ballplayers to demonstrate his description of professional athletes as living in a suspended childhood. Unrelieved by counterexamples, these sections quickly become tedious and even condescending.

It would have been much more in keeping with the rest of the book had Fox followed upon Tristram Coffin's description of how when archetypal country rustics like Rube Waddell and Dizzy Dean appear they are said to still be adhering to the informal rules of early baseball. It is also a shame that Fox does not choose to discuss the "muffin games" of the 1860s and 1870s, which offer valuable support for his contention that sports change only in "long, resilient cycles."

Notwithstanding a few shortcomings, *Big Leagues* can be confidently recommended. While the section devoted to nineteenth century baseball is comparatively short, it forms an important part of a fascinating, lively and informative study.

## THE *OTHER* ABNER DOUBLEDAY

By PETER MORRIS

THERE CAN BE NO BETTER ILLUSTRATION of baseball's affection for myths than the persistence of the Abner Doubleday legend. To this day, many casual baseball fans accept the ridiculous finding of the Mills Commission that Doubleday invented the game. Serious historians frustrated by the recalcitrance of this myth may be excused for wishing to dispel it forever. Nonetheless, there can be no benefit to fighting misinformation with misinformation.

The distinguished baseball scholar Charles Alexander uses two statements in *Our Game* (New York: Holt, 1987, p. 4) to debunk Doubleday: (1) that Doubleday was in West Point in 1839, and (2) that Doubleday left no record of having played baseball. There are problems with both of these commonly made assertions. First, General Doubleday did order baseball implements for his troops, as is documented on the Total Baseball website ([www.totalbaseball.com](http://www.totalbaseball.com)). Secondly, Mills Commission informant Abner Graves didn't specify 1839 as the year the events occurred. He actually said it was either the spring before or the spring following Harrison's Log Cabin and Hard Cider campaign, i.e. either 1840 or 1841. (However, this point is probably moot as Doubleday attended West Point from 1838-1842.) Finally, and most importantly, it is quite conceivable that the Abner Doubleday referred to by Abner Graves was not General Doubleday, but his younger cousin and namesake, Abner D. Doubleday.

Abner D. Doubleday was born in Otsego County, New York, on March 9, 1829, and lived there until after the Civil War. He then moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he was a prominent citizen until his death on November 20, 1903. In 1839 the future General Abner Doubleday was 20, Abner D. Doubleday was 10 and Abner Graves was 5. It certainly seems much more plausible that it was Abner D. Doubleday whom Graves identified as a playmate "several years older" and attending another school who interrupted a game of marbles to diagram a baseball diamond. Given that fact and the fact that General Doubleday was at West Point during these years, it makes sense to at least consider the possibility that Graves was thinking of Abner D. Doubleday.

While Graves did specify General Abner Doubleday, it seems reasonable to assume he simply confused two men of the same name; the error does not necessarily discredit his whole story. It is quite possible that there was an actual game of ball in Cooperstown in or around 1840 in which the younger Doubleday proposed some changes to the rules previously adhered to in that region. Obviously, such an event does not entitle Abner D. Doubleday to be recognized as the inventor of the game, nor as anything more than the slightest footnote in the history of baseball.

Since the Mills Commission has sentenced all of us to eternally having to debunk Doubleday, historical accuracy compels us to do so as meticulously as possible. As appealing as it may be to try to do so, nothing is gained by using inaccuracies to poke holes in Abner Graves' story. Instead we need to take a little more time and explain why the story, even if true, deserves no more than a footnote in the game's history.

*The author wishes to thank Bill Deane for his careful reading and comments on this piece, though Mr. Deane is in no way responsible for the opinions expressed therein. -P.M.*

## NEVER BEHIND THE TIMES

By MARTIN PAYNE

THE 1870s AND '80s WERE A TIME of experimentation and innovation for baseball and even the smallest towns were, in the words of one local scribe of the era, "not totally behind the times . . . in this particular." It appears that every change in the rules, tactics, and equipment was quickly and readily adopted. Here are some examples of the town teams of the Eastern Shore of Maryland keeping abreast of the National Pastime.

A. G. Spalding remembers first seeing a player slide into a base in 1866. Ralph Horton found evidence that Ned Cuthbert used a headfirst slide in 1865. When the Wissahiccon Club of Washington College in Chestertown, Md., met the Kent Club of Galena in a championship game in 1867 the reporter observed: "Anthony and Dyer [Kent] made bases when they were hopeless by an ingenious mode of slipping into them, in the teeth of the basemen." -*Kent News*, June 1, 1867.

In 1872 the pitching rules were liberalized, allowing a jerk of the wrist and elbow on the delivery. In 1873, when the Star Club of Cambridge, Md., took on the "imported" (professional) players of the Delawares of Seaford, Del., they employed these new rules and the following scene ensued: "Two balls were pitched and objection was made to the manner of delivery by Bryan, the pitcher. A book was called for and the following rule was read front page 41, The Base Ball Placer of 1873:

"The now established rules governing the delivery of the ball to the bat allows the pitcher either to toss the ball to the bat, to pitch it, to send it in with a sharp jerk, or give it additional impetus in speed by the peculiar action of the wrist or elbow, known as the underhand throw. . .

"Upon the authority here quoted the umpire very justly decided such pitching regular and admissible." The Delaware's reaction reminded us of the 'heathen chine's' [sic] - 'very peculiar,' but as the tables began to turn, oaths and vulgarity filled the air. The presence of ladies was no restraint upon them, but only seemed to stimulate them to give full rein to their ungentlemanly instincts." -*Dorchester Herald-News*, May 17, 1873.

It was rare that two town teams took the field without a copy of the official rules.

Toadvine, pitcher for the Salisbury White Cloud, offered an array of in- and out-curves with his underhand motion in the early 1870s, a technique he had acquired playing cricket in college. -*Wicomico News*, August 13, 1903. In 1883 the amateur Baltimore Club, featuring several ex-professionals, visited Cambridge, introducing the overhand curve, or the "down-shoot" then becoming the vogue with the three-quarter motion now allowed in the major leagues. Within weeks, Henry Lake of the Pastime was dazzling local foes with his version of the pitch. -*Dorchester Democrat-News*, July 7., 1883.

Fred Thayer is generally given credit for inventing the catcher's mask in 1877, but Pete Hotaling may have experimented with one a year earlier. Town teams were quick to adopt this particular tool of ignorance, as it was observed: "Base ball is one of the healthiest games, and gives more and better exercise than anything else. It is true there is some danger in it, but what is there no danger in? The report that the Easton's catcher had the bridge of his nose broken in

a practice game is false, but only struck on the nose and bruised. The club have now procured a mask and there is no more danger from that quarter." -*Easton Star-Democrat*, July 2, 1878.

A good catcher was as important to the success of a town team during this era as the pitcher. The condition of players' hands, particularly those of the catcher, were taken into consideration when arranging games. Few towns had more than one player who could handle the position. The Easton Club held its own against the Towsontowne Club of Baltimore in an 1884 contest until catcher Todd' s hands "gave out." When he was replaced in the eighth inning, the visitors countered with 11 runs to secure a 25 to 12 victory. -*Easton Star*, July 8, 1884.

Newspaper accounts attest to the physical demands made on the catcher when he had to receive a noted "fireballer." In the early 1880s Salisbury had such a pitcher in Charles Duffy. In one game catcher Gid Jordan "caught like a fiend. . . his hands busted, blood trickling down his arms" He was finally replaced late in the game, but only after victory had been secured. Jordan vowed he would never catch Duffy again. -*Wicomoco News*,. August 13. 1903.

It was around this time that Baltimore newspapers, reporting on the American Association club, indicate that new equipment was being developed for the catcher. Baltimore receivers inserted a lead plate in the glove the non-throwing hand, and in an 1884 exhibition, Rowe of Buffalo used a chest protector. - *Baltimore Day*, April 8, 1884. The glove, mask, and chest protector ere now used consistently by many professionals. It is probably no coincidental that once frequent references to the banged-up hand of catches and lost games are absent from newspaper accounts of these town teams after 1885.

There is no evidence that these small town teams were ever the innovator, but neither were they ever "behind the times."

#### THE FIRST MAJOR LEAGUE COLLEGIANS

By CAPPY GAGNON

THIS IS A DIFFICULT CATEGORY because of definitional problems. What is a *collegian*? What is a *major league*? When was the college attended and/or degree earned?

First members of a recognized major league (National Association, 1871-75) w have previously attended a college:

Cap Anson. NA 1871 Notre Dame 1866-68 (prep program)  
Iowa 1869-70 (prep program)  
Steve Bellan\*. NA 1871 Fordham (years unknown)  
Fred Treacey. NA 1871 Manhattan (years unknown)  
Denny Mack. NA 1871 Villanova 1866-70

First NA players to graduate from college:

Ranked by NA debut:

Jim Q' Rourke	1872	Yale. LLB 1887
Alexander Nevin*	1873	Yale. BA 1871
George Knight*	1875	Yale. BA 1877
Doc Bushong	1875	Pennsylvania. DOS 1882

Ranked by degree date:

Alexander Nevin*	NA 1873	Yale. BA 1874
George Knight*	NA 1875	Yale. BA 1877

Doc Bushong	NA 1875	Pennsylvania. DDS 882
Jim O' Rourke	NA 1872	Yale. LLB 1887

\*Did not play in the National League

First National Leaguers to graduate from college:

Ranked by NL debut:

Jim O' Rourke	1876	Yale. LLB 1887
Doe Bushong	1876	Pennsylvania. DOS 1882
Leonidas Lee	1877	Princeton. AB 1878
Frank Bliss	1878	Michigan. BA 1873. LLB 1879
John Ward	1878	Columbia. LLB 1894
Lee Richmond	1879	Brown. AB 1880: AM 1883: NYU. MD 1883
Jack Allen	1879	Pennsylvania. DOS 1880
Asa Stratton	1881	Brown. AB 1873: Boston Univ.. LLB 1875
Hal McClure	1882	Bucknell, graduate 1877
Jack Jones	1883	Yale. BA 1884; Harvard. DDS 1889
Will Sawyer	1883	Adalbert, graduate 1883

Ranked by first degree date:

Frank Bliss	Michigan. BA 1873; LLB 1879
Asa Stratton	Brown. AB 1873; Boston Univ., LLB 1875
Hal McClure	Bucknell, graduate 1877
Leonidas Lee	Princeton, AB 1878
Lee Richmond	Brown. AB 1880, AM 1883: NYU. MD 1883
Jack Allen	Pennsylvania, DDS 1880
Doc Bushong	Pennsylvania, DDS 1882
Will Sawyer	Adalbert, graduate 1883
Jack Jones	Yale, BA 1884: Harvard, DDS 1889
Jim O' Rourke	Yale, LLB 1887
John Ward	Columbia, LLB 1894

In summary, Anson, Nevin, O' Rourke, bliss, and Stratton can all lay claim to "first collegian" status, depending upon how the question is phrased.

(Any omissions? Let Cappy Gagnon know at P.O. Box 509, Notre Dame, IN 46556; e-mail <GAGNON.2@ND.EDU>.)

#### FREDERICK IVOR-CAMPBELL

COMPILER' S COMMENTARY

SCHAEFER TO TAKE OVER AT *NCN*

ROBERT SCHAEFER OF CRYSTALRIVER, FLORIDA, has been appointed by committee chair John Husman to replace me as compiler of *Nineteenth Century Notes*, effective with the next (Summer 1999) issue-which will follow hard on the heels of this one, as we attempt to restore *NCN* w a timely schedule.

Those of you who subscribe to SABR-L will already know Bob as a discoverer of important and entertaining data from the nineteenth century, and as a penetrating analyst of the early game. Though relatively new to the Nineteenth Century Committee, he has already established himself in many of our minds as one of the finest

researchers and analysts of early baseball.

I'm sure you'll be as pleased as I am to have Bob compiling *NCN*. I may be good at some things, but getting newsletters out on time hasn't been one of them. Anyway, I've been here seven years, and it's time for a new name under the masthead. I won't disappear entirely: I'll contribute from time to time. But I'm already beginning to savor the thought of receiving my copy of *NCN* whole in the mail rather than page by page out of my printer.

You can begin now sending items for *NCN* to Bob rather than to me. See the directors on page 10 for his address.

JOHN R. HUSMAN

#### REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF ACTIVITY during the past several months within our committee. BOB SCHAEFER has been appointed to compile *Nineteenth Century Notes* (see "Compiler's Commentary" above). We have added leaders for new and exciting projects that cover each year of the century. If you have an interest in helping with any of these, just make the contact. (A directory is provided on page 10.) Likewise, if you envision another project, suggest it. And finally, some of the best work ever done by our committee has been done by individuals. Please consider sharing that with all of us, either as a concept, progress notes, or as a result. A good way to do that is in this newsletter. Let Bob Schaefer know.

Because of the success several other SABR committees have had, we may want to consider having one of us act as archivist. The position has not yet been defined. Perhaps if we had an interested individual, that person could help with that. If you have any thoughts or ideas or interest, let me know. Feel free to make suggestions even if you have no interest in the position itself.

I must mention that our membership list is in disarray. As I mentioned in the last issue, we've grown significantly because most of those who joined the committee in order to participate in the nineteenth century portion of SABR Century Surveys have chosen to remain on the committee. That's the good news. The bad news is that many of you old members who chose not to participate in the survey also failed to renew your committee membership. To those of you who failed to send in your membership renewal form, unless we hear that you wish to remain on the committee, your name will be dropped from the roster, and from the *NCN* mailing list. To avoid this, let Bob Schaefer know right away that you wish to remain a committee member.

JAMES R. TOOTLE

#### VINTAGE BASE BALL

THE VINTAGE GAME CONTINUES TO GROW. Doug Smith, team manager for the Ohio Village Muffins and Lady Diamonds program, which is sponsored by the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, has compiled some interesting numbers which document the steady increase in the popularity of the vintage game. According to Doug, a former president of the Vintage Base Ball Association, there are approximately 58 clubs in 16 states and Canada, at latest count. Most of these clubs play by 1860s rules, although several represent the game as it was played in the later nineteenth or early

twentieth century.

Geographically, 20 of these 58 known vintage teams are located in Ohio. New York has 11 clubs. 10 of which play at Old Bethpage on Long Island. Michigan has 6. Minnesota and Colorado have 3 each, and Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Illinois have 2 each. New Jersey, Rhode Island, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, New Mexico, and the Canadian province of Ontario each have one club. Some of the newer clubs play only a handful of matches per year, but other more well-established programs play ambitious schedules of over 50 games per season and make out-of-state road trips.

In addition to scheduled matches with other clubs, vintage teams often appear at community festivals, Victorian Era fairs, Civil War encampments, and other local celebrations.

Doug Smith points out that "vintage base ball is also being played by Civil War reenactors, by visitors to historic sites, and by clubs who form to play for a yearly or one-time-only event."

JONATHAN DUNKLE

#### AA HISTORY PROJECT

##### THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION HISTORY PROJECT

continues to progress as more members are volunteering to assist in the project. FRANK VACCARO did a great job completing the 1891 Milwaukee season, as did FRED SCHULD with 1887 Cleveland. WALT WILSON contributed research he had done on the 1882 Cincinnati season. Work in progress includes: DAVID BALL on Columbus, 1883-84; Scott Allen on St. Louis, 1891; and JOHN HUSMAN on Toledo, 1890. Other members have expressed interest in working on the project.

Nonetheless, we still need volunteers to complete this ambitious project. The bulk of the work needed is for Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. There is also at least one uncompleted season for Cleveland, Kansas City, Rochester, Syracuse, and Washington.

*(To become part of the American Association project, contact Jon Dunkle at the address found in the directory on page 10.)*

#### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

##### CORRECTION

In *NCN*'s new members list, Winter 1999 issue, "MIKE SOMMER" should be corrected to MARK SOMMER.

##### NEW MEMBERS

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#### E-MAIL ADDRESSES

This expands the list of e-mail addresses begun in the Winter 1999  
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#### HELP WANTED

MARK COOPER (816 Chauncey Rd., Penn Valley, PA 19072; e-mail <Markbase@aol.com>) desires any information on baseball board, card, or arcade games made in the nineteenth century, including ads, instructions, descriptions and photos. "In particular, I am curious why Chief Zimmer had the most famous board game named after himself by McLoughlin Brothers. Was he in any way related to the New York name manufacturer?"

JOE HAARDT (9240 Vernon Dr., Great Falls, VA 22066; e-mail <chaardtj@erols.com>) would like to know how many of Ed Delahanty's four home runs in Chicago 13 July 1896 were hit inside the park. Sources differ: the SABR home run encyclopedia says two were IPHRs; the web site for This Day in Baseball History says they *all* were.

LARRY McCRAY (6424 N. 26th St. Arlington, VA 22207-1045; fax (703) 534-1916; e-mail <lmccray@cwix.com>) is particularly interested "in the evolution of the game from 1800 to 1850 or so," and would like to hear from like-minded committee members. "I spend my odd moments," he writes, "pondering why we adopted baseball and not some form of speed-cricket, or rugby, and why we didn't simply import whatever games were popular in London and Dublin at the time. And why we chose the double-eight ball over the seamless cricket ball. And maybe why rounders never evolved into an adult game in the old country, but did so here."

Richard Grant, an Australian who gives only an e-mail address <rgmnt@svmpac.com.au>, writes: "In the first installment of Ken Bums Baseball, mention was made of the Sons of Philadelphia Baseball Club 1870. Has anything been written about this club?" (Request relayed by DEAN SULLIVAN.)

Rich Coberly (P.O. Box 340, Downey, CA 90241; e-mail <Rcoberly@compuserve.com>; phone (949) 650-8860), noting the conflicting accounts and box scores of nineteenth century games, asks: "Are there any definitive box scores available for the nineteenth century?" Can anyone provide Rich a definitive answer to this question? He is preparing a new edition of his book *The No-Hit Hall of Fame*, and of course wants to get his facts straight.

#### NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMITTEE, SABR DIRECTORY OF CHAIRS AND PROJECT DIRECTORS

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