

# Originals.

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## THE MONTH IN 19cBB.

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoo group during the month of February to pursue a number of interesting topics.

### DISCUSSION.

#### ***Did the Civil War "Make" Baseball?***

Larry McCray described his exploration of sources on this subject, and his resulting doubts about the large role usually assigned to army-camp games. He found that Priscilla Astifan agreed. Craig Waff pointed out that the military units were at least at the outset state units, which may have hampered the spread of the game.

### SOURCES.

#### ***old-fashioned American game of base-ball***

George Thompson posted some news: Proquest now has the *New York Tribune* from 1841-1923. He posted an 1854 letter to the editor summarizing the base ball clubs operating in 1854. Craig Waff noted that similar letters appeared in other sources. George also posted an 1851 *Tribune* note mentioning the game,

and an 1844 note of a game of ball.

### DISCOVERIES.

#### ***From A Handy Book of Curious Information By William Shepard Walsh, 1913; Part I***

John Thorn quoted a 1913 piece which ably described The origins of base ball; no Mention of Abner D.

#### ***Match Game of Town Ball 1866***

Richard Hershberger sent a newspaper note of an 1866 town ball match held in Covington, KY, and noted that the game had evidently survived in the Cincinnati area for quite a bit longer than elsewhere. Richard followed up with yet another game note from the same year; both are from the Cincinnati *Enquirer*. John Thorn called attention to the recent article in *Base Ball* on the subject. Under "**yet more Cincinnati town ball, 1866**" Richard sent further references. David Ball posted additional points of interest on the subject.

#### ***a game of ball, California, 1854***

Richard Hershberger sent a Sacramento note of a ball game of an unknown type played on a street in the business district in 1854; he thinks it likely was base ball of some form.

#### ***more old fashioned base ball***

Using the newly available *New York Tribune* source, George Thompson posted an 1851 note mentioning the match played at a gathering of the Express Companies in New York City.

#### ***playing ball at a Fourierist commune, 1844***

George Thompson posted an 1844 *Tribune* note of a game of ball (of an undetermined type) at a commune in Ohio.

#### ***Indians playing ball at Hoboken, 1845***

George Thompson posted an 1845 note of Indians playing *their* ball game, presumably at the Elysian Fields. An expert in this subject area consulted by Peter Mancuso considered that this game would have been lacrosse. George also noted that we must be aware that the mention of an unexplained game of "ball" encompasses a wide variety of possible forms of play. A discussion ensued among Thompson, Paul Browne, and David Ball of an incompletely-explored diary at N.Y.H.S. that may have details.

#### ***Another baseball precursor***

John Pastier sent to SABR-L, and Rod Nelson then forwarded, a reference to a

ball court laid out by an Italian in Prague, then in the province of Bohemia in the Austrian Empire, in 1675. John asked for suggestions on the game's name. Jack Little recalled a Eastern European game that could be played in a limited space, though not the name. John sent to SABR-L, and Rod Nelson then forwarded, an article from a European website dealing with German base ball and the Ball House culture. Ed Shuman sent the suggestion that the game in question may be a variant of trap ball, and sent a link that exhibits the similarities.

#### **"Game at Bass"**

Hugh MacDougall posted a quotation from an 1844 volume by a Canadian author in which he recalls playing "bass" in his school boy days in Nova Scotia, ca. 1810.

#### INQUIRIES.

#### **"Don't let baseball die."**

Richard Hershberger sent the question, what was the source of this statement, which Lincoln was alleged to have uttered as he died, to none other than the non-inventor of baseball, Abner Doubleday. John Thorn identified the source as radio's Bill Stern. David Ball recalled Stern as the inventor of stories involving other presidents as well. Skip McAfee named Stern's program on CBS, the "Colgate Sports Newsreel". Andrew Milner and then David Ball added more examples of Stern's use of baseball in his whoppers. Richard asked if

Stern actually believed, or intended that his audience believe the stories.

#### **Andrew Peck, Ebenezer Dupignac, Clinton BBC of 1878 (Tim Keefe), Unions of Morrisania**

Frank Ceresi requested assistance on a laundry list of topics; John Thorn, Craig Waff, and Richard Stattler provided sources and some information.

#### **"Back to town ball"**

Richard Hershberger sent a 1916 quote from a Boston paper which showed an unusual degree of accuracy about the history of the old Philadelphia Athletics, and asked who the writer might have been. John Thorn sent his guess (Horace Fogel), which Richard considered reasonable.

#### **question about a Melville cite**

Richard Hershberger sent a request for information about Melville's statement in his book *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League* that the Knickerbockers at times played under the opposing team's rules. Craig Waff posted on an informal match which might be the source. John Thorn sent his opinion that Craig was correct, and added some player information. Richard thought that the explanation of an informal match appeared to clear up the matter.

#### **Integrated match.**

John Zinn sent a reference to an integrated match in New Jersey in 1870, and asked for other instances.

Richard Hershberger sent the instances, prior to 1860 and in 1869, that he is aware of.

#### **ORIGINS UPCOMING BOOKS.**

Dorothy Seymour Mills sends word that her next is a volume for McFarland of essays which will be called *Pursuing Baseball: Our National Obsession with Our National Game*. It will discuss the several ways we pursue our pleasure in baseball. It will include a discussion of our ongoing interest in learning about baseball's origins. The date of publication will be sometime in 2010 .

#### **ORIGINS THIS MONTH IN BASE BALL.**

#### *Protoball Chronology: Item 1858.41:*

"The Niagara Club, of Buffalo, also played on Saturday, on the vacant lot on Main Street, above the Medical College. We learn that several other clubs will soon organize, so that some rare sort may be anticipated the coming season. The Cricket Club will soon be out in full force . . . . We are pleased to notice this disposition to indulge in manly sports." *Cricket and Base Ball, Spirit of the Times*, Vol. 28, number 7 (Saturday, March 27, 1858)

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