

# Originals.

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## 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.

### INQUIRIES

#### ***Albert Pratt letter to Albert Spalding about Ticonderoga base ball***

Mike Dreimiller asked for the text of the Pratt letter referenced by David Block in his *Baseball Before We Knew It*. John Thorn sent it.

#### ***Chadwick on Plugging and the Knickerbockers***

John Thorn posted an item from Chadwick's diaries indicating that the Knicks plugged runners until 1858 and asked for thoughts. David Block mentioned a second reference in which Chadwick made the same statement. John feels that the statement, made in later years, disremembers the Knick's involvement but recalls the continuance of plugging by other ball clubs prior to 1857 - 1858. Richard Hershberger sent a list of alternative reasons for consideration. Gprdpn Hylton added that other forms of base ball carried on long past the 1850s. Peter Mancuso noted that

other forms may have still been played as late as 1920. Play using plugging was remembered by Dick McBane from his boyhood. Kyle DeCicco-Carey recalls wiffle - ball games using plugging in the 1980s, as did Tom Gilbert, Bill Akin, John Thorn, and David Dyte. Richard Hershberger note that the "play in the round" (no foul territory) noted by Bill Akin likely is a survival of pre-New York Game base ball.

David Ball inquired about the identity of the first non social club team, that is, the first team formed for the purpose of fielding a professional team. John Thorn agreed with David's guess that it was the 1870 Chicago club.

### DISCOVERIES

#### ***A few early bat and ball entries***

Hugh MacDougall posted items dated from 1827-1847 which he found in the America's Historical Newspapers series.

#### ***"Bat and Ball" 1791***

Richard Hershberger sent a note from the diary of a New England parson about "puerile sports" which has a description of equipment used in a game called "Bat and Ball." Kyle DeCicco - Carey noted that William Bentley, the author, was at Harvard College in 1781,

the year of an entry in Protoball concerning ball - playing at the college.

#### ***Very early base ball find***

Messrs. Tim Wiles and Peter Morris teamed up on the discovery of a report of a game of "base-ball" which took place in the town of Troy (Michigan) in 1826. Richard Hershberger David Block, and John Thorn cautioned that the report dates from 1877, making it susceptible to the several distortions of retrospection, but noted that its location in a county history points up the value of such local histories as sources, even if hard to locate and use, since they are usually not online. Hugh McDougall did some instant research on the players, and discovered them to be comparatively elderly, with many over 30. A corroborating local item was hoped for by several. Jonathan Frankel volunteered to check local sources. Of that possibility, Richard Hershberger was pretty certain that an item would not be found. Skip MacAfee noted the game's coincidence with THE all-time, greatest American coincidence, the deaths of Jefferson and Adams on the same date as the game, the Fourth of July 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Independence Declaration.

Paul Browne did a sweep on GenealogyBank.com of "baseball" references prior to 1850, but found little.

#### TANGENT

Paul Browne mentioned in his post the Miss Mitford sketches, pre-1850 pieces that mention base ball. Deb Shattuck inquired for a place to read them. Paul pointed her to Genealogy Bank.com, but John Thorn noted that they can be read on Google Books. Richard Hershberger noted that Miss Mitford was English, and David Ball that base ball is treated as a child's pastime in the sketches.

#### SEQUEL

Under the heading "Proto Ball in Troy, MI", the point was made by Dan Greenia, an area resident, that Troy and environs were just being heavily settled at the time of the reported game, probably by New Yorkers, which brought to the mind of John Thorn the Thurlow Weed game account.

Richard Hershberger was prompted to suggest that the infrequent but widely scattered early accounts may simply indicate that base ball was not rare but simply a common activity with no discernable path of diffusion from a central point. Deb Shattuck noted the same pattern for girls' teams. David Ball agreed and noted the tendency of historians to "tidy" their accounts by assuming that their evidence represents all there is to uncover.

#### ***how base ball exports the American Way***

Jon Daly provided the link to excerpts from a new book which mentions a prisoner of war camp ball game during the War of

1812. David Block noted that the incident was also described in Tom Altherr's article in NINE (v.8 n.2), reprinted by David in *Base Ball Before We Knew It* in an appendix. In his post, George Thompson thought this may refer to the 1815 Dartmoor Massacre in England.

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## CHUMNEY

*From Tom Altherr:*

Larry McCray and I, and perhaps others, continue to search for chermany, a 19th-century version of baseball which apparently was particular to Virginia. A couple of sources also refer to a game called chumney. In his *History of Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1955, p. 368) Harold Bradshaw defined chumney thus: "Chumney was similar to baseball, played with two teams, and had batters, pitchers, catchers, and fielders. The pitcher tried to pitch a good ball, and the batter tried to knock the solid rubber ball out of sight. A runner had to be hit when in motion to down him, and to go around the ring, which was larger than a baseball diamond, twice was, Bradshaw noted, "a real accomplishment". A biography, William Cable Bruce's *John Randolph of Roanoke 1773-1833* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970 [1922], v.2 p.469) poses a question or two about chumney. Bruce states that Randolph when an adult enjoyed playing games "then most common" with

the local boys, including chumney. While most sources discovered to date place chumney later, this indicates that it was common by the 1820s. If chumney was an earlier name for the game later referred to as chermany, then the game may have no connection to Germans.

But then where did the term "chumney" come from? None of the older dictionaries consulted list the term, and a search of British place names didn't turn up any locale by that name. There may have been some confusion with "chumley", which itself is a variant of "Cholmondeley", the family name of the longtime ruling family of Cheshire in northwest England. Did a variant of baseball obtain the name in that region and transplant it to Virginia?

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## NEW IN PROTOBALL, CONCLUDED

*The Protoball Chronology is online at <http://retrosheet.org/Protoball/chron.htm>. The series of lists of items added in 2009 concludes below.*

1860.28 – New England Publication Admits New Dominance of NY Game

1860.29 – "Canadian Game" Espied in Ontario

1860.30 – CT Wicketers Trounce CT Cricketers --at Wicket

1860.31 – Base Ball Crosses State of Missouri

1860.32 – Milwaukee Area Not Unanimous About the “Miserable” New York Rules

1860.34 – Disparate Ball Games Are Observed in New Hampshire

1860.35 – All-Out-Side-Out Town Ball Played in Indiana

1860.36 – In Detroit MI: Ball Club 56, Cricket Club 24.

1860.37 – Late Surge Lifts Douglas’ over Honest Abe Lincoln’s Side in Chicago IL

1860.38 – Base Ball Seen in Pittsburgh PA

1860.39 – In Oberlin OH, It’s the Railroad Club 49, Uptown Club 44.

1860.40 – “Championship” Game: Atlantic 20, Eckford 11

1860.41 – Two Base Ball Tourneys in California

1860.42 – Shut Out Reported as the First Ever; Excelsiors 25, St. George Nine Zip

1860.43 – Three Ball Clubs Form in VT Village

1860.44 – Score it 7-5-4: “Three Hands Out in a Jiffy”

1860.45 – Competitive “Old-Fashioned” Game is Still Alive in Syracuse NY

1860.46 – First International Game Played by New York Rules

1860.47 – Old-Fashioned Base Ball in Buffalo NY

1860.48 – “Veterans of 1812” Play OFBB . . . Annually?

1860.49 – Troy NY Writer: “Every Newspaper” Covers Base Ball Games, Some Showing “Petty Meanness”

1861.1 -- Chadwick Tries to Start Richmond Team, but the Civil War Intervenes

1861.2 – Stoolball Played, in Co-ed Form

1861c.3 – Town Ball in Maryland: Mr. Lincoln Faces Friendly Fire

1861.4 – Alex Chadwick Links Base Ball to English Rounders -- But It’s A Lot More Scientific

1861.5 – 15,000 Watch Ice Base Ball in Bkn: Atlantic 37, Charter Oak 26.

1861.6 – The Clipper Looks Back at the 1861 (Wartime) Season

1861.7 – Ontario Lads to Try the New York Game, May Forego “Canadian Game”

1861.8 – Vermont Club Forms

1861.9 – Buckeye BBC Forms in Cincinnati OH

1861.10 – Atlantic 52, Mutual 27, 6 Innings: Chadwick is Wowed by 26-Run 3rd

## CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO Originals

George Thompson wrote in to comment on the Bass Ball reference supplied by Tom Altherr:

Regarding "bass ball" vs. "base ball": "Bass" wasn't necessarily pronounced like the fish; if instead it was pronounced like the musical term, then "bass ball" and "base ball" would have sounded alike.

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## MORRIS, THOLKES TO EDUCATE VINTAGE BALLISTS

Peter Morris and Bob Tholkes, solons of the Origins Committee, will make presentations at the annual meeting March 27-23 of the Vintage Base Ball Association in Port Huron, Michigan. Bob will present selected items found in his recent work on the New York *Sunday Mercury*.

Peter will present selected items from his landmark book, *A Game of Inches*.

## SUBMISSION OF ITEMS.

Please send items for *Originals* to the editor, Bob Tholkes, at email [rjtholkes@msn.com](mailto:rjtholkes@msn.com).