

Originals.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research
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SABR MEETING MEETING

Chairperson McCray promises for next month's *Originals* a full report on the Origins Committee meeting at held at the recent SABR convention in Atlanta.

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THE MONTH IN 19cBB

Members of the Origins Committee mostly holidayed during the month of August, insofar as using the 19cBB yahoo group is concerned.

DISCOVERIES

Ball Playing Ban from 1653

Significantly up-ing the ante on the most antiquated ball-playing reference unearthed, Mr. Thorn sent a quotation from a history of New Amsterdam which includes Ball as an activity, along with many others, prohibited on the Sabbath.

'Lecton Day games

Richard Hershberger sent an 1831 item which lists "base" among the entertainments enjoyed in Massachusetts on Election

Day. Richard believes from the context of the item that base ball is meant.

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TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

MORE COLLEGE BASEBALL-TYPE PLAY

In his 1835 book, *New England and Her Institutions*, children's book author Jacob Abbott included a letter describing college life at an unspecified American college sometime around or before 1835. Among the several recreational opportunities was a base ball-type game. The letter-writer remarked that after breakfast "a few were playing ball in the yard, and one was carrying around a subscription paper to raise money to purchase a couple of footballs." The game they were playing was probably not football, however, because later in the afternoon the letter-writer offered more specific comments: "[M]any were engaged in playing ball in the yard. I joined the party who were swinging the bat-stick." [Jacob Abbott], *New England and Her Institutions* (Boston: John Allen and Company, 1835), pp. 161-162

A MINISTER ADVISES HIS FUTURE MINISTER SON TO PLAY BALL AT HARVARD

In 1797, the Rev. Joseph Buckminster wrote to his son, Joseph S. Buckminster, urging him to include ball play in his vigorous exercises. At age 13, the young Buckminster had just matriculated at Harvard. On August 10th, the elder wrote in a letter from Portsmouth, New Hampshire: "Do not play in study-hours, and play-hours will be better used in exercise, vigorous exercise. --walking and playing ball." Letter reprinted in Eliza Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs of Rev. Joseph Buckminster, D.D., and of His Son, Rev. Joseph Stevens Buckminster* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1851), p. 88

TWO EARLY DARTMOUTH COLLEGE BASEBALL REFERENCES

In his book, *The College on the Hill: A Dartmouth Chronicle*, Ralph Nading Hill referred to some base ball - type games existing at the college in 1837 and 1856. Future judge David Cross, class of 1841, mentioned a "go-as-you-please style" of baseball played as early as 1837 by "a dozen or more students." (It is unclear if the phrase "go-as-you-please" was Cross's or Hill's). Second, Hill quoted Amos Currier, class

of 1856, as describing baseball "as much played but not organized." As with many colleges, baseball did become more organized right after the Civil War. Ralph Nading Hill, ed., *The College on a Hill: A Dartmouth Chronicle* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Pub., 1964)

ANOTHER REV.
BENTLEY REFERENCE
TO BALL PLAY

Protoball 191.3 already lists Salem, MA minister William Bentley's description of bat and ball. But Bentley referred to ball play on at least one other occasion. In July 1797, Bentley observed a dwarf child and remarked in his July 26th diary entry, "They have taught it only the childish amusements of ball, play at marbles, & with a whip, having no acquaintance with the fine arts or any other than country amusements. Such a sight was novel." William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts* (Salem, MA: The Essex Institute, 1907), vol. 2, p. 229.

SCHOOLBOY TRAP BALL
AND BASEBALL

In an 1853 satirical sketch in *The United States Review*, the anonymous writer underscored how popular baseball and trap ball were at his school: "If base-balls and trap-bats would have passed [as currency], we could have gone forth as millionaires." [Anonymous], "School-House Sketches," *The United States Review* July, 1853

ANOTHER
RUTHERFORD HAYES
BALL-PLAYING
REFERENCE

Protoball already lists, as 1839.3, a diary entry by future United States president Rutherford B. Hayes about playing ball at Kenyon College. Five years later, Hayes penned another interesting entry in his diary. While in law school at Harvard, Hayes wrote the following for the 8th of April, 1844: "I am now quite lame, from scuffling, and all my fingers stiffened by playing ball. Pretty business for a law student. Yes, pretty enough; why not? Good exercise and also great sport." (Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, vol. 1* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922), p. 149). The self-deprecation is intriguing, but so is his reversal to defend his sport. Hayes' fingers presumably were smarting because of the lack of gloves in those days.

MORE THOMAS
ROBBINS BALL-PLAYING
REFERENCES

In two previous articles, I detailed Connecticut Congregationalist minister and teacher, Thomas Robbins, playing and watching ball games in his home state and in Ohio. Later in his life, he made at least two other observations of ball play. In February (February!), 1828, during his tenure as a pastor in Norwalk, Connecticut, wrote in his diary for the 21st: "The boys play ball in the streets." According to

Robbins, the weather that day was warm and languid." Eleven years later, in 1839, by then a preacher at Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, Robbins again noted the sport. "Some are playing ball. Very pleasant," he observed in his March 28th entry. Apparently he himself was done playing, but he retained some interest in the games. Increase N. Tarbox, ed., *Diary of Thomas Robbins, D.D., 1796-1854*, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1887), vol. 2, pp. 84 and 527.

MORE BALL-PLAYING
AT HARVARD

In the spring of 1840, Frederic Dan Huntington, a student at Harvard's Divinity School, recorded that he and his compatriots were enthusiasts for ball play. "A game of ball occupies us an hour or two of every day," he wrote. Huntington, a son of minister Dan Huntington and later a bishop in central New York State, had preferred hunting and field sports as a college student at Amherst, but apparently the ball-playing bug bit him in Cambridge. Huntington didn't elaborate how long the craze continued or whether or not that included ball on the Sabbath, but at face value perhaps his statement would be evidence of a strong presence of ball play at the college. Frederic Dan Huntington, quoted in Arria Sargent Huntington, *Memoir and Letters of Frederic Dan Huntington* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1906), pp. 49-50.

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150 YEARS AGO

*from the pages of the New
York Sunday Mercury*

Ed.- the "conquering" (tie-breaking) match between the Excelsior Club and the Atlantic Club in August 1860 ended when the Excelsiors left the field in protest against the crowd's rowdy behavior, directed primarily at the Excelsiors and the umpire, R. H. Thorne. The next issue of the *Sunday Mercury*, on September 2, 1860, included the following from the Atlantics.

"In consequence of their being so much comment reflecting on us in regard to our late match with the Excelsior Club, and the Press so unanimous in adjudging all the odium consequent upon the abrupt termination of the game on the Atlantic Club and their friends, we think that, in simple justice to ourselves and them, , we are bound to make a frank record of the affair, in the confident hope and anticipation that a discerning public will, now that the excitement has in a measure subsided, give our side of the story a fair and just hearing.

In the first place, we made every possible effort to have "a clear field and no favor," and in this, as in the last game, we feel happy to say that through the exertions of Mr. Folk, aided by his efficient body of police, we succeeded beyond the possibility of a

doubt. What more can any club do? Can we restrain a burst of applause or indignation emanating from an assemblage of more than 15,000 excited spectators, whose feelings are enlisted as the game proceeds, by the effort of this or that player?

He who has witnessed the natural excitement which is ever the attendant of a vast, miscellaneous assemblage, whether called together by a regatta, an important trial of speed on the turf, or a match between noted base ball organizations, know full well that it is an utter impossibility to prevent the crowd from expressing their sentiments in a manner and as audibly as they please.

Mr. Thorn, the umpire on this occasion ,was calm, and expressed himself not all annoyed by the exclamations of the spectators. The members of the Atlantic nine remarked to him at the most exciting period of the game, that they would sustain him in all of his decisions, and urged the continuance of the play. Then let us ask what caused its abrupt termination?

Nothing, in our opinion, judging from the language made use of by the ungovernable temper of a friend of ours on the other side, and who seems to be getting exceedingly nervous of late ; and, if the nine is to be called off the ground on all occasions where the pressure is rather high, we think ball-playing will soon lose its most essential features ; that is, first, the presence of the ladies-- which, of

course, ought to be best guarantee for good behavior of the players, and the crowd in general. We think such conduct by first-class clubs, as a precedent, will lead to similar occurrences by inferior clubs, and finally terminate in the ruin of the game as a national pastime ; and how the press can uphold a club, or individual, in such an instance, and say they have the interest of the game at heart, is something the Atlantics cannot understand, as, after listening quietly to all that has been said, they still claim to know something of the game of base ball, and believe that such conduct cannot, and has not, been anything but detrimental to the game.

We wish the public to understand that we do not win our battles in the newspapers, but on the green turf, and we are also firm in the faith that the club is yet to be organized which can deprive us of our well-earned championship."

F. K. BOUGHTON
Secretary, Atlantic B. B. C.

SUBMISSION OF ITEMS

Readers are encouraged to forward corrections, notes, and other types of correspondence. Such items will be gratefully received, and published in the following issue. Send to the editor, Bob Tholkes, using e-mail rjtholkes@msn.com.