

Originals.

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THE MONTH IN 19cBB

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoo group during the past month of October to pursue a number of topics of interest.

INQUIRIES

19th C base ball find from a blog

Jon Daly posted an 1870 note about Thanksgiving Day games closing the season in New York City and inquired whether the group know of this tradition. Bob Tholkes noted that it dated to 1859 at the latest. Craig Waff posted items from earlier in the 1850s. David Ball posted an 1846 *Brooklyn Eagle* note that "cricket and base ball clubs" were closing their seasons that day, and wondered how many clubs could be involved. David Dyte believed the note referred to clubs that played both games. Richard Hershberger provided evidence to the contrary.

Rochester baseball uniform

Finding a description of an 1858 Rochester uniform shirt as a "Marie Louise flannel", Priscilla Astifan asked for information. John Thorn sent a link, <http://goo.gl/aYPCC>.

Craig Waff sent an additional reference, and his request for the reference for Priscilla's quotation, which she supplied.

Galveston News March 17-April 1859

Priscilla Astifan asked for a source for this historic newspaper.

DISCOVERIES

father of his National Pastime?

Bob Tholkes noted three references to Washington playing ball in a new (2009) biography of the first president, by Ron Chernow. One refers specifically to cricket as the game.

a good bat has many uses, not just one...

George Thompson posted an 1843 note that a ball bat had been used to "settle a business dispute", by its application to the noggin of one of the parties. David Ball recalled seeing other such instances. David Block contributed an 1829 note of a schoolboy killed by an accidental blow to the head by a "ball club".

TANGENT

The "good bat" post somehow got off onto the subject of base ball nomenclature's usage in non-base ball contexts. David Ball and David Block sent examples indicating that three strikes and baulks

were features of long standing before adoption into the New York rules.

CONTINUATION.

More on Doubleday's hardiness.

Reviving an earlier discussion of the hardiness of the Doubleday myth, John Thorn posted a link to a relevant piece. Richard Hershberger added comments on both invention myths, including Cartwright in the category, to which John and David Ball responded; Richard considered that the Cartwright myth owes its strength to its comparative plausibility. Priscilla Astifan recommended Monica Nuciarone's 2009 biography of Cartwright for further information. Rod Nelson was dubious about prospects for suppression of the Doubleday myth, noting another recent newsworthy outbreak. Enrico provided a European perspective to David's observation that searching for lone inventors was a pastime of Americans in particular, to which Ian Nannestad and Paul Browne provided rejoinders. Marcus Dickson provided the results of a large cross-cultural study bearing on the point. Mike Williams attributed the myth's hardiness to the stature of Doubleday and Albert Spalding. Various respon-

dents contrasted baseball's invention story to those of other sports. John Thorn theorized that the nature of sport ("the common man's theater") leant itself to legend and myth, and noted that the subject is touched on in his forthcoming (March 2011) book on early base ball, *Baseball In the Garden of Eden*.

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TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

PENNSYLVANIA BOYS PLAY BALL AS PART OF PLOT AGAINST TEACHER

Remembering back to his boyhood in Clearfield County, PA during the late 1830s and early 1840s, Ezekiel Boring Kephart recounted a tale of how one time he and his schoolmates conspired to bar out the teacher. Kephart, who himself later became a teacher as well as a politician and preacher, participated in the common ritual of suckering the teacher outside the building, only to lock doors and block windows so he couldn't return. While the kids were plotting their strategies, Kephart mentioned that "some of the boys went out and played ball." Although he didn't elaborate on the ball play, the sense of the passage was that this type of play was so common as to not arouse suspicion in the teacher. Lewis Franklin John, *The Life of Ezekiel Boring Kephart* (Dayton, Ohio: Press of the United

Brethren Publ., 1907), p. 73

WOMEN PLAY A BAT AND BALL GAME IN ITALY IN THE 15th CENTURY

Among the frescoes hanging on the walls of the Casa Borromeo in Milan is one that depicts five women engaged in some sort of bat and ball game. Although it is not possible to reproduce the painting here, one woman standing at left holds a bat in her right hand and a ball in her left, as if preparing to strike it. Four other women are lined up in the center and right portions, apparently ready to catch the ball in their gowns, which they are holding slightly up to form a basket of sorts. The author of a 1918 article on the frescoes thought the game seemed "to foreshadow stool-ball and cricket." Lionel Cust, "The Frescoes in the Casa Borromeo at Milan," *The Burlington Magazine*, v. 33, n. 184 (July, 1918), p. 8

YANKEE GOVERNESS RECALLS PLAYING BALL WITH HER BROTHERS

In an 1860 collection of letters penned by a Northern governess, under the *nom de plume* of "Miss Kate Conyngham," a reference to girls playing ball with their brothers appears. Writing from New Orleans in the mid-1850s, the governess recollected "my girlish days, when I used to fly kites, fish, and play ball with my brothers." Presuming she was at least in her twenties, if not older, that would place her ball-playing days in the 1840s, if not earlier. Be-

cause she hid behind a pen name, there is no way of knowing where in the North she grew up, whether she was a tomboy, and whether girls playing ball was a common event. Joseph W. Ingraham, *The Sunny South; or, The Southerner at Home, Embracing Five Years' Experience of a Northern Governess* (Philadelphia: G.G. Evans, Publisher, 1860), p. 336

BANGOR BOPS BAT AND BALL IN 1834

The 1834 ordinances for the city of Bangor, Maine listed bat and ball play as an "injurious practice": "SECT. 35. *Be it further ordained*, That no person shall play at the game of bat and ball, nor strike any ball with a bat, or machine,... on penalty of fifty cents for such offence." This ordinance is a little more specific than other contemporary restriction, although it makes one wonder what "machines" they were using to strike a ball. Was this a reference to trapball? Sometimes the trap contraption that elevated the ball was called a machine. *The City Charter and Ordinances of the City of Bangor* (Bangor, ME: James Burton, Jr., 1834), p. 49

1836 TRAVEL GUIDE LISTS BASEBALL-TYPE GAMES IN NEW ENGLAND AND ELSEWHERE

Charles A. Goodrich, having assembled remarks from various travel writers in 1836, published *The Universal Traveller*. The guide listed several baseball-type games: "The

games and amusements of New England, [italicized in original] are similar to those of other sections of the United States. The young men are expert in a variety of games at ball,-- such as cricket, base, cat, football, trapball, also quoits, &c." Charles A. Goodrich, *The Universal Traveller* 2nd ed. (Hartford, CT: Canfield and Robins, 1836), p. 38

MORE SCHOOL BALL IN PENNSYLVANIA

Edward Hicks Magill, a longtime academician on the college level, wrote fondly of his first teaching stint, in his hometown of Solebury, Bucks County, Pennsylvania around 1841: "From the opening of school I engaged with my pupils in games of ball, snow-balling, etc., during the recess, just as one of them,..." This presented a slight problem for Magill as he had to control the students during class time and some of the students were older than he was. Edward Hicks Magill, *Sixty-Five Years in the Life of a Teacher 1841-1906* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1907), p. 11

MORE BALL PLAY IN CENTRAL NEW YORK IN THE 1830s AND 1840s

Isaac Phillips Roberts, a farm boy near Cayuga Lake in central New York state in the late 1830s and 1840s left some detail about playing a baseball-type game. Roberts, who later became a professor of agriculture at Cornell, wrote that even though children of his generation had less leisure time than

later boys and girls did, they still found time to play, especially what he called baseball: "The most general [game]. then as now, was baseball, which differed from the modern game in several features. The ball was reasonably soft. It might be thrown at a runner if he was off base, by anyone of the opposing side, and if he were hit, he was out. Strikes and hits and fouls were the same as now; but it was a more dignified game in that it consisted of dodging rather than sliding into bases. We waxed as enthusiastic as boys do now, but such a thing as betting on an amateur game was quite unknown." Isaac Phillips Roberts, *Autobiography of a Farm Boy* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, Publishers, 1916), pp. 7-71

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150 YEARS AGO

from the pages of the New York Sunday Mercury

December 2, 1860

SURPRISE VISIT TO MR. PERRY AT HOBOKEN.

On Friday afternoon, Nov. 30, Mr. Perry was presented with a very handsome tea set, consisting of fifty-eight pieces of china and seven pieces of silver, by the following base ball clubs that have played on his ground the last season, vis. : Knickerbocker, Eagle, Empire, Gotham, Alpine, Mutual, Jefferson, and St Nicholas. The testimonial was presented by Mr. Bloomfield, of the Empire Club, with a few very appropriate re-

marks. Mr. Perry responded in that showed his appreciation of the gift. The interview was a pleasant one, and long to be remembered by the participants thereof.

CHARTER OAK CLUB.

Some time since, the Charter Oak club, of Brooklyn, received as a present from Charter Oak Engine Company, of Hartford, a handsome case, containing a ball made from the old Charter Oak, famed in history. In return, the Charter Oak Club have had prepared, by James F. Lomas, of Brooklyn, a very neatly-executed card of thanks, which is to be handsomely framed, and presented to Charter Oak Engine Co. No. 1, of Hartford, on the evening of their arrival, on the 19th inst.

ECKFORD CLUB.-- This club terminated the season on Thursday last, with a match between the light and heavy weights, and a collation to suit. The match and the collation passed off very pleasantly, and everyone present was well satisfied. This club will hold their annual ball on the 15th of January, in Brooklyn.

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