

# ORIGINALS.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research  
August 2008 © SABR Vol. 1 No. 6

## THE MONTH IN 19cBB.

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahogroup during the months of June and July to pursue a number of interests.

### JUNE.

#### DISCOVERIES.

*1866 Town Ball.* John Thorn, considering it rather a late date, posted a mention of a town ball match in Newport, KY, in May 1866. Richard Hershberger considered it very late indeed, knowing himself of none later. John and Richard followed up with posts about professional base ball players known to have played town balls, including Charlie Gould and the Fisler brothers. Richard issued a reminder that the terms “town ball” and “base ball” cannot be thrown around loosely without running the risk of lexicographical distortion.

#### TONGUE IN CHEEK.

*Game Books of the Brooklyn Atlantics at the NYPL.* Richard Hershberger, scanning the sample Game Book image posted by David Dyte, noted to Mr. Thorn that not only were the Brooklyn club’s books there, but that

he, Thorn, had taken part in the match described and been assaulted for 40 runs, prompting a retort that “fault finders were everywhere”. This proved true, as David Ball added the observation that John was then in his prime and should have performed more effectively.

### INQUIRIES.

*The French Connection.* Craig Waff inquired about the E. L. French scrapbook collection mentioned in Peter Morris’ new book, *But Didn’t We Have Fun?* John Thorn replied by reposting an entry from 2005 in which he provided information on the French collection. Two past users of the documents, Richard Hershberger, and Frank Ceresi, posted additional information.

*Game Books of the Brooklyn Atlantics at the NYPL.* Craig Waff, who is co-authoring an article on the Atlantics for the Pioneer Project, requested input from others who have used the Game Book collection. John Thorn posted the bad news that the collection in question is of a different Atlantics club, the Atlantics of Jamaica. Mark Lamster added the point that SABR owns a microfilm of the collection, and posted discouraging words about NYPL facilities. David Dyte

attested that the Game Books of the *Brooklyn Atlantics* are indeed at the NYPL and posted a link to a sample image. John Thorn later clarified the listings by noting that the club is listed as the “Atlantic Base Ball Club of Brooklyn and Jamaica”. An inquiry was posted by Richard Hershberger: did the books include club days? The answer from David Dyte was a tentative yes. Craig Waff recounted the Atlantics’ early intrasquad matches.

### JULY.

#### FOLLOW UP.

*Star Spangled Banner.* Following up on last month’s posts about the connection between the future national anthem and base ball (it was first played before a match in 1862), Priscilla Astifan posted a mention that it was played during a post-match fete in Rochester, N.Y. in 1859.

### INQUIRIES.

*Research question 1845-1856.*

Peter Mancuso forwarded an inquiry he received asking for a pre-1857 census of players in New York City and Brooklyn.

*Lucy Kennedy.* Joseph Hylton inquired about the author of *The Sunlit Field*

(1950), the *milieu* of which includes 1850s base ball. John Thorn had some scant additional info.

*18<sup>th</sup>-Century bat and ball game playing advice.*

Looking for advice, Kyle DeCicco – Carey posted a request for sources of information about playing 18<sup>th</sup>-century ball and bat games.

*Frank and Daniel Marsh.* Frank Ceresi posted details from an 1867 letter he has acquired which mentions possible players in the area of New London, CT. he requested assistance.

#### DISCOVERIES.

*New Black Base Ball Clubs?* John Thorn posted an 1868 notice of a match between two black clubs from Connecticut whose names were new to him.

#### TANGENT.

*Pre-war integrated baseball in Rochester, NY.* Following up on the subject of early integrated baseball, Priscilla Astifan posted a summary of information on the subject for pre-war Rochester. Craig Waff added a game account of 1859 from Rochester.

#### REFERENCE WORKS.

Craig Waff reported that the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* site has been renovated. Craig found it more user-friendly. Subsequent posts revealed that searches for narrow ranges of dates now require the use of the Advanced Search feature.

Jonathan Frankel and Rod Nelson separately posted information from the GenealogyBank.com site listing the additional newspapers recently added to its offerings.



## BASE BALL DISCOVERED COMMENTARY

Cecilia Tan's blog, [www.whyilikebaseball.com](http://www.whyilikebaseball.com) posted among her notes on the SABR convention her commentary on the debut of *Base Ball Discovered* and the panel discussion which followed:

I nearly forgot the other special event of the day from this morning, was the premiere of a new movie documentary, "Baseball Discovered," which was made by MLB Advanced Media and which followed SABR member David Block on a trip to England in search of baseball's ancestry. John Thorn is also prominently featured in the film, and after the one hour film was shown Block, Thorn, Tom Schieber of the Hall of Fame, and Sam Marchiano (the producer of the film for MLBAM) all spoke on a panel and took questions. The documentary is really great, and while in the UK making it, publicity about their filming led a woman in Surrey to bring forth an 18th century diary she had found in an old shed which clearly has the earliest recorded written mention of baseball, in the 1755 diary of one William Bray. And by wild coincidence,

there is a Bill Bray pitching in the major leagues right now who is a relative of his! Not only that, Bill Bray pitched in the game LAST NIGHT for Cincinnati, which meant he was in town! MLBAM invited him to the premiere, too, and he got up and said a few words about how awesome it was to be connected to the history of the game that way. Really neat.

There is no DVD on sale yet. It will soon be available on iTunes, will stream from mlb.com ([www.mlb.com/baseballdiscovered/](http://www.mlb.com/baseballdiscovered/)) and soon will be distributed (still be worked out).



## THIS MONTH IN BASE BALL.

On August 17, 1864, Father Chadwick printed in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* a whimsical account of an exhibition held at the Excelsiors' grounds and matching two groups of Union Army officers, the "American Nine" and the "Tall Man's Team", the latter led by a General Tallman. Each nine used a 10-man lineup. One of the umpires (there were three) was accused of distraction by "glances of some glittering orbs that were shot from a carriage nearby". After the match, "the order of the day was changed to one well known to Shakespearian readers, it being, 'May good digestion wait on appetite and health on both.' How are you, clam chowder?"