

Originals.

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

November 2009

© SABR

Vol. 2 No. 11

NEW TRAP BALL REFERENCES

Tom Altherr forwards the following references to the game of trap ball, from the era when it was apparently a danger to public welfare:

1) The May 24, 1773 issue of the *South Carolina Gazette* reprinted a series of presentments from a recent grand jury held in Beaufort, South Carolina. Number VIII reads as follows: "We present as a growing Evil, the frequent assembling of Negroes in the Town on Sundays, and playing games of Trap-ball and Fives, which is not taken proper Notice of by Magistrates, Conftables, and other Parifh-Officers." This reference is possibly the earliest which refers to African Americans, slaves or also possibly a few free blacks, playing a baseball-type game, and playing frequently and apparently enthusiastically. Fives is a handball-type game. The presentment also reflected the fears that whites had about slaves assembling in some number as well as the continuing Protestant objections to recreation on the Sabbath.

2) About 1765, eight years earlier than the reference

above, *Nugae Etonenses*, a document which concerns student recreations at Eton College in England. was published. *Nugae* means trifles or miscellaneous items in Latin. *Nugae* listed trap ball and cricket among thirty popular games, several of which have eluded description. Many of the games clearly were not of the bat-and-ball variety, but it remains possible that additional research could show one or more of the unknown games to be bat-and-ball contests. Several histories of Eton have preprinted or discussed *Nugae*, although the actual copies of the original are believed to be quite rare; perhaps only two are extant. Alice Morse Earle, the American social historian, reprinted the compilation in her *Child Life in Colonial Days* (1899), and suggested that a number of these games crossed the Atlantic to the colonies.

ORIGINS

STOOLBALL REPORT

Our correspondent, Martin Hoerchner, took in the championship tournament for Stoolball in England, as he does annually, and, with help from John and Kay Price, filed this report for *Originals*:

Forget the World Series. Forget the Cup Final. Forget the Super Bowl, the Olympics, the Kentucky Derby, the Lower Oakland Roller Derby finals. There is no greater spectacle in sports than the annual Stoolball Championship Tournament in Seaford, Sussex.

That is, unless it rains...

Why such hyperbole, you're probably asking. First of all, the setting. It takes place on The Salts Recreation Ground, a huge expanse of beautiful green grass right next to a shingle (stone) beach, in a gap in a long row of chalk cliffs, where the English Channel pounds the rocks and rolls on out to France, about twenty miles away. The park is actually below sea level, and has often been under water in the winter. The name most likely comes from the salt that was scraped off the land to originally create the park.

Another is the action, the compression of time, in which four circular pitches are laid out side-by-side. The action is almost constant; the comparison to a three-ring circus is obvious, but it's more like a track & field meet, with something always going on, and often many things at the same time. The land rises on the east, so from that angle, you can see the entire spectacle, with the

coastal cliffs rising in the background.

Another is watching the participants. These teams – though not all stoolball teams – are composed of female players, most in their 20's and early 30's. They obviously enjoy what they're doing, and they're fun to watch. They can chase down a ball and fire it towards the crease with the grace of a ballerina. I once did a photo sequence of such a play, and after completing the throw, the player who we would call an outfielder did a perfect ballet stance.

And it didn't rain this year. In this often-rainy summer (the Gay Pride parade the day before had been soaked); it was a beautiful day, with puffy white clouds not turning dark and threatening. A stiff breeze came off the sea for the entire day, carrying the smells of baguettes and coq au vin in from France. This is my third or fourth one I've attended, and I never get tired of it.

We strode onto the huge field and immediately spotted John and Kay Price; ageless and tireless, I saw them *running* to another portion of the contact. I yelled at them, "Don't you ever slow down?"

An interesting sidelight was that there was a gambling operation going on in the hut that served as the headquarters for the tournament and also held the restrooms. The game was called tombola, in which the gamer would put his money down and draw four cards, one after another. If any card was a face card, the player won a

prize that was set on top of the corresponding card on a nearby table. I initially thought it was odd that such gambling would be connected with a sporting event; I had forgotten that this was the country that the Puritans fled. The British are not so afraid of gambling. Besides, this was a fund-raising event. My son did so well that he was accused of counting cards; but since the one making the accusation was me, we were not run out of town on a rail.

In case you're wishing I would get to the point, I can reveal that in 2009, the 53rd such tournament, the traditional stoolball powerhouse Angmering beat last year's champion, Horsted Keynes, by the score of 54 – 42. Angmering dominated the tournament, winning the early-round games by huge margins.

Angmering caught my eye as I first approached the fields of play; with their crisp yellow and blue uniforms and confident demeanor. They played with *authority* and looked like champions. Being a Pac-10 alumnus, their uniforms reminded me of the Cal Bears.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the competition is that it is the entire stoolball league postseason compressed into a few hours. The league is named The Sussex County Stoolball Association, and the five divisions are from the East, Central, Mid, North and West. The top four teams in each division go to Seaford on the first Sunday of August, and the

remaining teams go to the "Rest of the League" Tournament in Plumpton the Sunday before. So this tournament would start with twenty teams, but only eighteen showed up; two clubs were unable to raise a team due to school and family holidays.

A draw is held to place one team from each division into one of four groups, designated A,B,C, and D. In this case, two groups had five teams, and two had four teams. Another draw is held to determine which group gets which pitch. And so begins the round robin stage.

In this abbreviated format, each game consists of four or five overs (four if in a five-team group and five if in a four-team group). And here the definition of an over is eight pitched balls (in cricket it's six). There is one innings, which means that each team's lineup plays all the way through.

In the round robin stage, each team plays all the other teams in their group. After the dust had settled (actually there wasn't much dust, and the wind never died down), the section winners were:

Section One: United Friends (formerly known as Sidley (in East Division)

Section Two: Ringmer (a former championship winning team from Mid Division).

Section Three: Angmering (another former 10-times champion from West Division).

Section Four: Horsted Keynes (last year's winners from Central Division).

These names won't be familiar to our American

readers, but they are among the towns and villages of Sussex, a county full of green rolling hills. Mixtures of the old and new, the traditional and modern, to an American visitor they would both conform to and buck the stereotypes. So what is the difference between a town and a village? In Britain, the difference between a city and a town is that a city has a cathedral, so I submit that the difference between a town and a village is that a town has a McDonalds.

After the round robin stage came the knockout stage. In semi-finals, Angmering beat United Friends 68-57, and Horsted Keynes beat Ringmer 48-32, setting up the final in which last year's champions Horsted Keynes met the frequent champion Angmering. I'll let more knowledgeable experts (that is, the Prices) explain the final result:

"Batting first in the final, Horsted Keynes found it difficult to score quickly against the steady bowling of Angmering and its first class fielding, with wickets falling at regular intervals. Their final score of 42 in four overs was to prove insufficient for stopping Angmering claiming their 11th Sussex title as openers Melissa Mantle and Gill Hilliard achieved the necessary runs during the third over."

Angmering won their Divisional league with an unbeaten record, and later went on to win the grand slam in Stoolball, winning the Sussex Knock Out Cup and The County League Championship, held on

back - to -back week - ends in September.

Angmering has won the contest many times in the past, possibly more than any other team, and they looked the part. What kind of place is Angmering? It's a few miles inland from what the French call La Manche. I half-expected Wikipedia to state that it was in the Domesday Book; it didn't, but Bronze Age settlements and a Roman villa have been found. Unfortunately, no ancient stoolball pitch has yet been found, and the results of the 1453 tournament still remain shrouded in the mists of time.

ORIGINS

THE MONTH IN 19cBB

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

MISCELLANEA

Cartwright vs. Doubleday

Monica Nucciarone, whose biography of Cartwright was published this year, asked for feedback on an idea for a movie about the "invention" of base ball built around the "myths" of Messrs. Cartwright and Doubleday. Jack Little believed it would involve a tradeoff of accuracy for the sake of a possibly wider audience. Darryl Brock agreed but cautioned that most such projects never get off the ground, with which Monica agreed.

Muffin Game Likened to the Cats in Kilkenny

Craig Waff posted an 1858 *Porter's* description of a muffin match, and also the etymology of the metaphor therein.

INQUIRIES

match games between NABBP and outside teams?

David Ball posted a note requesting any available source on rules or customs involving matches between NABBP - member teams and outside teams; his inquiry was prompted by an 1869 note concerning a match cancelled because a club had played a club that was not only outside but colored. Bob Tholkes sent two 1859 items from the *Sunday Mercury* which concerned challenges. In further posts, David and Richard Hershberger sent comments for interracial base ball in the post-Civil War period and the need at that time and place to disguise segregationist sentiment. Larry McCray noted that the question of whether or how often NABBP clubs played clubs from outside the Convention could be settled by checking Craig Waff's games tabulation or the list in Marshall Wright.

"base ball alley"

Richard Hershberger sent an 1858 item reporting that a game of racket had been broken up in a "base ball alley", and requested any information on the term. The item suggested that it was an illegal game involving gambling. John Thorn, Peter Mancuso, and Kyle DeCicco - Carey

traded information about the alley's location but had none about the term.

DISCOVERIES

Cricket match, 1828

George Thompson posted an 1828 announcement of a cricket match in New York City, at a venue not known to him, Beef Steak House. David Ball opined that the Albion Club, one of the sides in the match, likely consisted of British expatriates, which would confirm that the sport in America was dominated by Britons, as was true later. Richard Hershberger sent a request for any available box score for the match.

SOURCES

Base Ball in the War Camps

Larry McCray noted the large increase in Protoball Chronology items dating from the Civil War, and concerning games held in army camps. He listed the trends now observable in the items and offered a 5 - page abstract of the data set. Rod Nelson accepted the offer. The basis for the skepticism about the size of the role of the war in spreading the New York game was explained by Richard Hershberger.

Cricket Matches

John Thorn posted the link to records of cricket matches in the U.S. in the 1860s. Beth Hise added that the Cricket Matches project is ongoing and is updated regularly.

Eckford Social Club

Craig Waff posted a source "For those interested in

the evolution of some of the early pioneer base ball clubs into social clubs". Richard Hershberger sent his request that anyone able to take advantage of the source (which is in Brooklyn) share the results with him, as he is studying the subject.

ORIGINS

NEW IN PROTOBALL, CONTINUED.

OCTOBER OMISSIONS MADE GOOD.

It occurred recently to the geniuses at *Originals* that it might be useful for the membership if a list of the new items in the Protoball Chronology, Committee Chair Larry McCray's ever-growing list of published references to base ball and the many other safe-haven games also played in the Origins period, was posted regularly. The first update, a catch-up edition for all of 2009 to date, began in the October issue, covering the period from 2500 B. C. to 1823 A. D.; this month's list only advances to 1841, but includes many items omitted in last month's list...my apologies to Mr. McCray. -ed.

370C.1 – Saint Augustine Recalls Punishment for Youthful Games.

640s.1 – Medieval Writer: Saint Cuthbert [b. 634c] "Pleyde atte balle".

1470c.1 –Editor Sees Stoolball Mention in Verse on Bachelorhood.

1478.2 – "Grump" Parliament Speaks: Jail or Fine Levied for Unlawful Gameplaying.

1540.1 – A Pitcher, a Catcher and a Batter in a Golf History Book?

1656.3 – Cromwellians Needlessly Ban Cricket from Ireland.

1660c.1 – Village Life: The Men to Foot-Ball, Maids and Kids to Stoolball.

1661.1 – Galileo Galilei Discovers . . . Backspin!

1683c.1 – Cricket's First Wicket is Pitched.

1700c.2 – Wicket on Boston Common . . . But Never on Sunday.

1720.2 -- Holiday in Kent: Cricket, Tippling, Stool-Ball, Kissing.

1720.3 – Cricket in Kent; Londoners Beat Kent Eleven, But Two Are Konked Out.

1725.2 – Challenge to Play Single-Wicket Cricket Sent by Duke of Richmond.

1731.1 – Thousands Watch First Known Draw in Cricket.

1747.2 – Well-Advertised Women's Cricket Match Held, Sixpence Admission.

1775.2 – Soldier in MA Played Ball.

1776c.3 – Revolutionary War Officer Plays Cricket, Picks Blueberries.

1779.6 – Dartmouth College Fine for Ballplay – Two Shillings.

1780c.7 –The Young Josiah Quincy of MA: “My Heart was in Ball”.

1781.3 – Harvard “Game at Ball” Various Perceived.

1785.2 – Cricket, Long Transoceanic in Range, Now Gets Past Hadrian’s Wall.

1786.2 -- Game Called Wicket Is Reported in England.

1790s.6 – Cricket as Played in Hamburg, Ger., Resembled the U.S. Game of Wicket?

1790s.7 – In Boston, “Boys Played Ball in the Streets?”

1824.6 – Great Jurist Recalls Schoolboy Baseball and Phillips Academy

1825.11 – Cricket Prohibited On or Near The Highways of England, We Mean It.

1825c.12 – “How the Game of Ball Was Played”.

1827.2 – Story Places Baseball in Rochester N.Y.

1827.6 – For Good Health: Cricket for the Blokes, Bass-ball for the Lasses.

1827.7 – NY Boy Celebrates Release from School By Playing Ball.

1829.3 – Small Cambridge MA Schoolground Crimps Base and Cricket Play.

1830s.5 -- Wicket Played in The Western Reserve

1830.18 –At PA Ballfield, Man Asks An English Question, And Receives An American Answer.

1830s.19 -- NH Lad Had Happy Games of Ball.

1830s.20 –In GA, Men Played Fives, Schoolboys Played Base and Town Ball

1830s.21-- Future OH Senator Has No Interest in Playing Ball.

1830s.22 – Ballplaying Recurs in Abolitionist’s Life.

1831.4 – As His Mom Sobs Fondly, NH Lad Rushes Out to Play Ball.

1832.9 Norwich CT Sets \$2 Fine for Playing Ball

1833.10 – Letter Refers to “That Beautiful game – Base Ball”.

1833.11 – MA Clergyman Notes “Usual” Fast Day Defections For Ballplaying

1835c.14 – *Eagle* Article Describes Early Process for Ball-Making.

1836.7 – Scots Still Play “Ball Paces,” a Type of Trap Ball with Running

1837.8 – Well, As Goes Indianapolis, So Goes Canton.

1837. 9 – Hoboken NJ -- a Mecca Already for Ballplayers.

1840.27 -- Hartford CT Skunks Granville MA at Wicket

1840s.28 -- At Hobart

College, “Wicket and Baseball Played in Summer”

1840s.29 -- Rural Boys “Played Bass Ball” in Western Ohio

1840s.30 – Ballplayer Recalls Boyhood Matches, Ballmaking, Adult Play.

1840s.31 –Lem: Juvenile Fiction’s Boy Who Loved Round-ball.

1840s.32 – Ballplaying by Slaves is Part of a Normal Plantation Sunday in GA.

1840c.33 -- Future University Head Plays Two Types of Ball in NC.

1840c.34 –Ball-Playing at Marshall College in PA.

1840.35 – Carlisle PA Bans Playing Ball.

1841.14 – NY State Senator Tests the Sabbath Law.

1841.15 – Base and Wicket in New Orleans?

1841.16 –Fast Day Choice in ME: Hear a “Fact Sermon” or Play Ball?

1841.17 – Clevelanders Play Ball at Sunset on Water Street.

SUBMISSION OF ITEMS.

Please send items for *Originals* to the editor, Bob Tholkes, at email rjtholkes@msn.com.