NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMITTEE
SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

Number 93:1 Winter 1993

1993—THE CENTENNIAL OF MODERN BASEBALL

MANY STUDENTS OF THE GAME date the start of baseball's modern era at 1901, with the emergence of the American League as a major league, and the formation of the minor league umbrella organization, the National Association. And there is no disputing that 1901 does mark a transforming milestone in the history and structure of professional baseball.

But the game itself emerged into modernity eight years earlier—one hundred years ago, in 1893—when the pitcher's box was replaced by the pitcher's rubber, and the pitching distance was increased from 51' to its present 60'6". To be sure, this increase is less than it seems at first, for the old distance measured the closest the pitcher could be to the batter at the end of his delivery, whereas the new distance measured the starting point of his delivery. Further, innovations and rules changes (usually intended, as with the 1893 change, to adjust the balance between pitcher and batter) have continued almost unabated since 1893, with some of them, like the foul strike and the designated hitter, of more than minor importance. But as it turns out, the pitching rule of 1893 fixed the diamond distances for the next hundred years.

In 1893 baseball entered a century of remarkable stability of form. For comparison, look at the changes in football and basketball—or almost any sport—over the same century.

We seem now to have entered upon an era of baseball postmodernism, in which many recent "advances" are rejected. At Baltimore's new Orioles Park at Camden Yards, the real grass and asymmetrical outfield turn back the clock in ways more significant than the stadium's postmodern architecture. Postmodern too are the increasingly loud cries against the designated hitter rule, and the return to less colorful uniforms.

But baseball's postmodernism looks back only to an earlier twentieth century. Safety considerations (and vastly increased attendance) forbid a return to the old wooden ball park. Softball and the Little Leagues satisfy whatever needs there are for pre-modern diamond distances, so no one suggests moving the pitcher closer to the batter. In the rejection of the Astros' rainbow jerseys for the more staid uniform styles of the 1950s we see an unhappy echo of early twentieth century baseball's drift away from the often vibrant uniforms of the nineteenth century.

Pre-modern baseball is not entirely forgotten, of course. The existence of our committee is evidence of that, as is the growing interest in playing and watching baseball played by pre-modern rules. The Troy-Worcester games of last spring are one example. And next July fourth, in Ohio, JOHN HUSMAN'S Great Black Swamp Frogs Base Ball Club will take part in a tournament with teams from three states, played by mid-nineteenth-century rules.

A centennial by its nature provides opportunity to celebrate both past and present. Sometimes we long for the "good old days" of baseball. But Nostalgia is a deceitful lover, tinting the past with rosy hues and, when we yield ourselves wholly, suffocating us. In celebrating the centennial of modern baseball, we avoid Nostalgia's snare, holding fast to today's game even as we embrace the past which gave it birth.

–Fred Ivor-Campbell

MORE ABOUT THE WAGNERS

(Continuing the Discussion from *NCN* October 1992)

IN HIS RECENT BOOK, *July 2, 1903*, SABRite Mike Sowell discusses (on pages 143-44) George and Earl Wagner's ownership of the Washington club in the 1890s with the derision standard among baseball historians.

But JOHN PHILLIPS offers to *NCN* this assessment of Earl Wagner which suggests that his contemporaries judged him less harshly than more recent writers do:

"Earl knew how to work the press. He was always saying he was trying to buy Amos Rusie or George Davis from the Giants, etc., and the D. C. papers would print it, showing of course how hard he was working to bring winning ball to Washington. From reading the local papers, I assume Earl must have been a genial fellow, full of tales and a good source of anecdotes and stories. Occasionally the locals would get down on him for being tight, but he either took good care of the press or was a personable enough fellow to get away with things generally."

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

NEW MEMBERS

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMITTEE welcomes to membership:

BILL CAHILL, 28 Marine Av., Brooklyn, NY 11209

JOSEPH (JOE) KLEIN, 45 Stone Rd., Sudbury, MA 01776

JAMES W (JIM) MOORE, 1222 Driftwood Ct., Arnold, MD 21012

JIM MOORE, 28 Lake St., Cooperstown, NY 13326

TED WIDMER, PO Box 2020, Cambridge, MA 02238

DAVID (DAVE) ZEMAN, 208 S. Michigan Av., Addison, IL 60101

NEW ADDRESSES

DAVID ARCIDIACONO, 72 Charles Mary Dr., East Hampton, CT 06424

WALTER L. LECONTE, JR., 833 Bay Ridge Av., Ap. 2F, Brooklyn, NY 11220

DAVID PIETRUSZA, 49 Heritage Parkway, Scotia, NY 12302

DEPARTURES

Daniel Zucker has left SABR.

FREDERICK IVOR-CAMPBELL

COMPILER'S COMMENTARY

PRESENT AT SAN DIEGO

IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT the nineteenth century presentations we would like to give at San Diego in June. The convention committee encourages us to consider poster presentations as well as the traditional oral reports.

There is a procedure to follow:

1. Send a stamped return envelope to Bob Boynton, 376 Bellaire St., Del Mar, CA 29104 for instructions.

2. The instructions will ask us to return a brief form, plus an abstract of our presentation, plus two stamped return envelopes. Boynton will acknowledge receipt of the proposal, indicating when we are likely to learn whether it has been accepted. The deadline for submitting proposals is April 1, but Boynton would like them "much sooner." "Quality will be a major criterion," he says, but "otherwise the policy of 'first-come, first-served' will prevail." So, the sooner he hears from us, the better.

As I write this I am staring at the abstract for my own proposed presentation—"Why Forty-Two Paces?"—which deals with the original Knickerbocker rules. A few more revisions and I'll cross my fingers and mail it off.

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES
Number 93:1 Winter 1993
Frederick Ivor-Campbell, compiler
21 Martin St., Warren, RI 02885
401-245-2548

SABR'S BIOGRAPHICAL COMMITTEE

SEVERAL MEMBERS of the Nineteenth Century Committee also serve on the Biographical Committee, and most of the rest of us are familiar with the good work that committee does in ferreting out missing data and correcting erroneous information on the names, birth and death dates, heights and weights, batting and throwing arms, and debut dates of major league players. If you read the feature on the committee in *Baseball Weekly* (December 2, 1992, pp. 24-25), you also know that it maintains a "20 Most Wanted" list, and that about three fourths of the players on the list played in the nineteenth century.

Those of you who wish to search *actively* for this data should contact Biographical Committee chair Bill Carle (8220 E. 135th St., Grandview, MO., 64030) about committee membership. But BOB RICHARDSON (a member of both committees) suggests that even those of us who do not belong to the Biographical Committee can watch for missing data as we pursue our own research.

Bob writes: "There are 497 'missing' players (assumed dead, but not confirmed, often not even accurately identified), and more than 400 of them are nineteenth century players, including such significant folk as Mike McGeary, Charlie Jones, George Bechtel, Dave Rowe and Hugh Daily. I suspect many nineteenth century researchers might have run across a clue on one of the missing men in the course of their travels. (Somebody doing college baseball research might recognize Thompson and Rollinson, the collegiate battery Washington [UA] used at Boston in June 1884, for instance.) Others might be interested in pursuing someone in their area from the clues the Biographical Committee has assembled."

If you who are not members of the Biographical Committee desire information on that committee's needs, I'll see what we can do to publicize them in *NCN*. Let me hear from you.

POSTAGE POLICY

A MEMBER OF OUR COMMITTEE has provided a modest sum to fund the cost of photocopying and mailing items that are offered from time to time in *NCN*. As long as this fund holds out, I will not ask for or expect reimbursement for such items, unless they are so lengthy that copying and sending them without charge would deplete the fund too rapidly. In the past, some of you have thoughtfully included a check with your requests. These checks have been added with thanks to the photocopy/postage fund.

NCN TO APPEAR QUARTERLY

THIS ISSUE OF *NCN* is the first of four planned for 1993—the most newsletters ever for our committee in one year—as we move to a quarterly schedule. While my aim is to mail *NCN* in January, April, July and October, once in a while (as with this issue) circumstances will force a slight delay in publication. To give myself some leeway (and save myself the embarrassment of occasionally sending *NCN* out late), I have revised way it is dated, replacing the month with the season of the year.

BALLPARKS PROJECT LAUNCHED

SABR'S BALLPARKS COMMITTEE, in its November-December 1992 newsletter, reports that work is beginning on a long-term project to research and write essays on the ballparks of the 36 cities that hosted major league baseball from 1871 to the dawn of the modern stadium era in 1909. The project is being coordinated by BOB BAILEY, a member of both the Ballparks and Nineteenth Century Committees, who asks those interested in participating to contact him for further instructions. (His address: 12129 Briargate Ln., Goshen, KY 40026; phone 502-228-5269.)

Each essay will focus on a city's ballparks' location, architecture, construction, alterations, other uses, demise, and current site use. The cities to be covered are Altoona, Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus (Ohio), Detroit, Elizabeth (N.J.), Fort Wayne, Hartford, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Keokuk, Louisville, Middletown (Ct.), Milwaukee, Newark, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence, Richmond, Rochester (N.Y.), Rockford (Ill.), St. Louis, St. Paul, Syracuse, Toledo, Troy, Washington, Wilmington, and Worcester.

Bailey's draft essay on Louisville's ballparks is available to prospective authors from Ballparks Committee chair Bob Bluthardt (244 N. Oxford Dr., San Angelo, TX 76901).

HELP WANTED

DR. JOSEPH A. BALDASSARRE (Dept. of Music, Boise State Univ., 1910 University Dr., Boise ID 83725) would like information (including schedules, if available) of games to be played by nineteenth century rules in the Pacific Northwest (especially Seattle, Portland and Corvallis), in or around Boise, and in or around Cleveland, Ohio.

JAMES E. MCKEE (407 Bauman Ave., Baden, PA 15005) would like help in identifying the baseball players pictured in Harry C. Palmer's *Athletic Sports in America* (1888).

To fine tune the request of MARK POLLAK (1 East Highfield Rd., Baltimore, MD 21218) in the October issue: Mark would especially like evidence that these nineteenth century minor leagues—the International Association, the League Alliance, the Eastern Championship Association, and the Nortwest League—regarded themselves, or were regarded by others, or aspired to be major leagues. Also, is there evidence of other nineteenth century minor leagues that aspired to or claimed major league status?

PAUL SOYKA (3730 Liberty Ave., North Bergen, NJ 07047) wants to know if anyone has compiled a list of attendance for each major league (NA and NL) game from 1871–1879.

ROBERT C. WONDERLING (1017 N. Lawrence St., Philadelphia, PA 19123), who is interested in baseball during the Civil War era, seeks assistance in "researching the exploits of the 71st New York Guards, a semi-pro team that participated in many exhibitions and later was decimated at the battle of Bull Run."

CSA VETERANS. Did any *Confederate* veterans play in the National Association (1871–75)? If you know of any, send their names, with evidence of their military service, to FRED IVOR-CAMPBELL for publication in *NCN*.

NINETEENTH CENTURY RE-CREATIONS. *NCN* would like to publish the schedules of games played under nineteenth century rules. If you know of upcoming scheduled games (from May 1 on), please send the following information to FRED IVOR-CAMPBELL: (1) the date and precise location of each game, and the starting time if it is known; (2) the names of the teams that are competing (and, if appropriate, the cities or towns they represent); (3) the year of the rules under which the game is being played; and (4) the name of a person, with address and/or phone number, to contact for further information and confirmation of the schedule.

HELP OFFERED

JIM MOORE (1222 Driftwood Ct., Arnold, MD 21012) is researching the archives of the National Museum of Health and Medicine (Washington, D.C.) for references to baseball in letters written to and from soldiers during the Civil War. He writes: "I will be glad to share whatever I find with anyone interested in baseball during the Civil War."

ITEMS RECEIVED

A TWENTY-INNING PITCHERS' DUEL between Rube Waddell and Cy Young prompted the *New York Clipper* (July 5, 1905) to recall a pair of particularly lengthy nineteenth century games. BILL CAHILL has provided the committee with photocopies of the *Clipper* account of the two games (which includes box scores): (1) a 20-inning contest between Cincinnati and Chicago, June 30, 1892 (Mullane vs. Gumbert, a 7-7 tie, called for darkness after 2 hours, 20 minutes); and (2) a 25-inning game between Fargo and Grand Forks, in which pitchers named Raymer and Gibbs dueled to a 0-0 conclusion. (For a copy of this article, contact FRED IVOR-CAMPBELL.)

Cahill has also given the committee a photocopy of a series of articles on New York baseball (1870–1904) by William M. Rankin, published in the *New York Clipper* in 1905. We will reprint this series in a more readable format for distribution at cost to committee members who wish a copy. (For an excerpt from Rankin's series, see "How Professional Baseball Came to Manhattan," p. 6.)

WATCH FOR . . .

THE SPRING BOOK ISSUE of *Publishers Weekly* (Jan. 18) lists or advertises many of the new baseball books we may expect to see in bookstores over the next few weeks and months. None deal either wholly or chiefly with the nineteenth century game, but several look as though they will touch upon it. One that looks to be of more than

routine interest is Robert Smith's *Baseball in the Afternoon*, from Simon & Schuster, which was announced for March but was in the stores before mid-February. For many of us it is rather startling to realize that there are people alive and active today who talked baseball with players from the nineteenth century, but there are, and Smith (whose 1947 book *Baseball* is included in the Nineteenth Century Researcher's Library book list) is one of them. Now in his late eighties, Smith in his new book recalls stories about ballplayers from the past whom he has known. About half the book deals with nineteenth century baseball.

Other books in which we can expect (or at least hope for) some attention to the nineteenth century include the two latest entries in Bruce Chadwick's "Memories and Memorabilia" series, *The Dodgers* and *The Giants*, both coming in February from Abbeville; Peter Filichia's *Professional Baseball Franchises* (Facts on File, February), which promises to cover "every pro league ever based in the U. S., Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico"; *Baseball Treasures: Memorabilia from the National Pastime*, ("includes photographs of over 1000 items") by Douglas Congdon-Martin and John Kashmanian (Schiffer, February); and *The New Phillies Encyclopedia*, by Rich Westcott and Frank Bilovsky (Temple University Press, April). (Also advertised in *Publishers Weekly*: the new anthology of SABR articles, *The Perfect Game*, edited by committee member MARK ALVAREZ, coming in April from Taylor; and SABR's four 1992 publications, which are being marketed to bookstores by InBook, a Connecticut distributor.)

New editions of the two essential encyclopedias are also coming this spring: *Total Baseball* (3d edition) in March from a new publisher, HarperCollins; and *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (9th edition), in June from Macmillan. *Total Baseball* will be available in paperback for the first time, at $35; "Big Mac" in hardcover is advertised at $55.

Also new, and already available: *Baseball: A History of America's Game* by SABRite Benjamin Rader. (See Dean Sullivan's review below.)

BOOK REVIEW

BASEBALL: A HISTORY OF AMERICA'S GAME. By BENJAMIN G. RADER. University of Illinois Press, 54 E. Gregory Dr., Champaign, IL 61820. 1993 (c. 1992). xvii+233 pages. $24.95. (Note: Although the publisher gives March 15 as the publication date, the book was available in some bookstores in January.)

Reviewed by DEAN A. SULLIVAN

In *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, University of Nebraska historian Benjamin Rader achieves his objective of writing a brief, accessible interpretive account of baseball history. Though the book—the second volume in the Illinois History of Sports series—is targeted to non-specialists, it has value also to those knowledgeable about baseball history. In the eighty-one pages devoted to the pre-1903 era (nearly forty percent of the book) are examinations of the "fraternal" nature of early clubs, the pressures created by commercialism and the rise of professional teams, and the growing tensions between teams and players and among magnates and leagues.

Alas, no book is perfect; this is no exception. Rader states more than once that the reserve clause was established in 1877, when it was actually instituted in 1879. It was not the Metropolitans, but a newly formed club, that represented New York in the National League in 1883 and later became known as the Giants. And Tommy McCarthy was not Boston's manager in the 1890s. Aside from these and several other minor errors, however, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* remains a valuable synthesis of recent scholarship and a first-rate introduction to baseball history.

MORE FOR THE RESEARCHER'S LIBRARY

(Additions to the list of books in the July 1992 *NCN*)

Lipset, Lew. *The Encyclopedia of Baseball Cards, Vol. I: 19th Century Cards*, 1983. "Well-illustrated. A basic reference for collectors of nineteenth century baseball cards, and 'almost cards' like the *Harper's* woodcuts." (Fred Ivor-Campbell)

Patten, William, and G.Walker McSpadden. *The Book of Baseball.* 1911. "Features a portrait gallery of nineteenth and early twentieth century stars as well as a complete review of the game in action. Great photos." (Newt Weaver)

REGIONAL ARTICLES

ONE OF THE GOOD THINGS about the Nineteenth Century Committee is that its membership is distributed throughout the United States, and into Canada, Japan and Australia. We can use this advantage to track down articles on nineteenth century baseball that appear in regional journals, magazines and newspapers, and which are likely to go unnoticed outside the regions in which they are published.

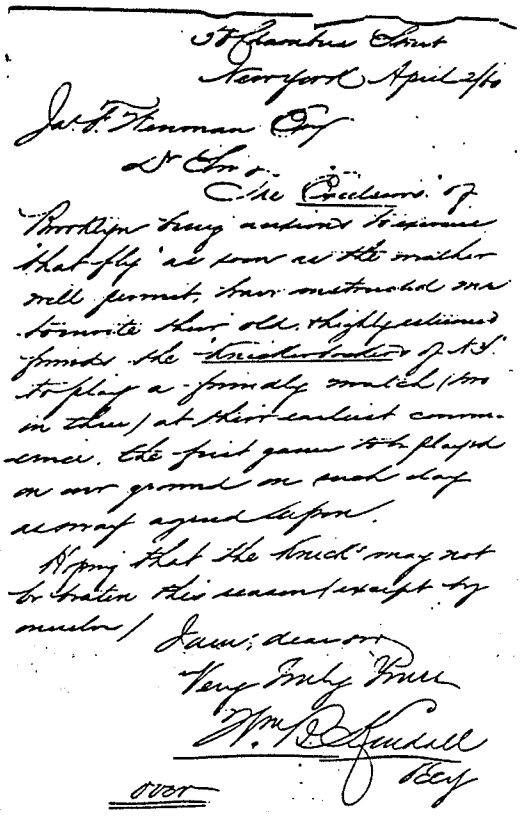
Following is a sampling of articles published in regional publications in 1991, as listed in the bibliographical periodical *America History and Life.*

Franks, Joel S. "Rube Levy: A San Francisco Shoe Cutter and the Origin of Professional Baseball in California." *California History*, vol. 70, no. 2 (1991), pp. 174-91.

Moore, Jim. "Mark Twain and the Em Quads: A 'Square' Deal." *Californians*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1991), pp. 48-54. [The Em Quads were a San Francisco ball club.]

Warnock, James. "Entrepreneurs and Progressives: Baseball in the Northwest, 1900–1901." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, vol. 82 (July 1991), pp. 92-100.

Please watch for articles dealing with nineteenth century baseball in your regional publications, and send the following information to FRED IVOR-CAMPBELL: Author. article title. name of publication. volume number, issue number, date, and page numbers of article. Also send along whatever comments on the articles you feel moved to make. The listings and comments will be published in *NCN.*



[Courtesy M. Rucker, Transcendental Graphics]

51 Chambers Street
New York April 2/60

Jas. F. Wenman Esq
D[r] Sir

The "Excelsiors" of Brooklyn being anxious to exercise "that fly" as soon as the weather will permit, have instructed me to invite their old, & highly esteemed friends the "Knickerbockers of NY." to play a friendly match (two in three) at their earliest convenience, the first game to be played on our ground on such day as may [be] agreed upon.

Hoping that the Knick[s] may not be beaten this season (except by ourselves)

I am, dear sir
Very Truly Yours
Wm B. Kendall
Secy

over

COPY THAT DOCUMENT!

THE 1860 CHALLENGE to the Knickerbockers from the Excelsiors reproduced above—a letter significant for its allusion to the "fly" game favored by the Knickerbockers but not adopted generally until 1864—is one document among countless unique testimonials to early baseball history that are still extant in libraries, museums, and private hands. The researcher's ideal would be for every such document to be catalogued and available for study. While the ideal may be unattainable, working toward it seems a SABR thing to do.

We might well begin with the items we already own. We should list each unique and rare item in our possession, then photocopy those that can be copied without damage. Documents too fragile to photocopy can often be satisfactorily photographed. If necessary (although, because of the time it takes and the likelihood of error, this is a last resort) items can be transcribed, then carefully compared with the original and corrected. All of us—dealers especially, because they often possess items for only a short time—should feel a compulsion to copy the unique documents of the game that come into or pass through our hands.

A note should be attached to each copy or transcription describing aspects of the item that are not revealed in the replica, like different colors of ink, or which writing is in pencil and which in ink. (Another example: on a scorecard from Game One of the 1884 World Series, the club names and lineups are printed on tabs of paper pasted over what were no doubt different lineups; this suggests that the scorecard was recycled from an unsold card printed for an earlier regular season or exhibition game. Photocopies of the scorecard don't show that new lineups have been pasted over old, so an explanatory note needs to accompany the copy.) The accompanying note should also include any information we have about the history of the item—who owned it originally, how it came into our hands, whatever we know about its significance.

What nineteenth century materials should we prepare and preserve copies of? Just about every one-of-a kind item concerning anyone who was connected in some way with baseball: letters (even if they aren't about baseball), including twentieth century items that touch on the nineteenth century game or on anyone connected with it; diaries and journals; contracts; minutes and proceedings of club meetings; photos and other graphic material; and scored scorecards (unscored cards, too, if they contain lineups), not only for regular season games of major clubs, but for every game of every club.

I will be happy to maintain, for the Nineteenth Century Committee, a file with copies of (1) correspondence, (2) scorecards, and (3) other unique documents under 10 pages long, plus a listing of other and longer items that you yourselves maintain and are willing to share with others. Copies of items sent to me will be available to committee members without charge, and to others for the cost of copying and postage. Copies sent to me, and items you maintain yourself but are willing to copy for others, will be listed in *NCN*.

–Fred Ivor-Campbell

HOW PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CAME TO MANHATTAN

By William M. Rankin

(From Part I of a series in the *New York Clipper,* 1905)

THE PROSPECTS FOR GOOD BALL for the season of 1880 looked bright, when a strong professional team was organized and located on the Union grounds. It was called the Brooklyns, but after a few games were played the team disbanded. Several efforts were made toward reviving the interest in the game, but nothing came from them. It was not until August that anything like the real thing happened. Then the Nationals of Washington and the Rochester team came here and played a series of games on the Union grounds. Their fine playing had the effect of stimulating interest in baseball, but the location of the Union grounds was so inconvenient that people would not patronize the games in sufficient numbers to make the venture a financial success. The coming of the two teams resulted in the organization of a local professional nine, known as the Unions, which competed with the visiting teams in a three-cornered tournament on the Union grounds. The first game was played on August 11 and the final one on August 28. Hoping to enrich themselves, the Nationals and Rochesters went to Coney Island on August 14 and played a really interesting game, which resulted in a victory for the Rochesters by a score of 4 to 3.

Evidently the visiting teams were not satisfied with the outlook, and as their finances were not increasing they pulled up stakes and hied themselves off to Washington. This left the Unions high and dry, with no other team to play with. Steps were immediately taken toward the organization of a team called the New Yorks. The man selected to play first base on this team was none other than the person who was responsible for the location of the first professional ball ground on Manhattan Island—James Mutrie. With that natural Yankee shrewdness, it did not take Mutrie long to see that professional baseball would not pay on the Union grounds on account of the inconvenience in reaching them. With the object of finding a suitable site on Manhattan Island for a ball park, Mutrie visited all parts of the city, and finally decided that the property used by the Westchester Polo Club, located between Fifth and Sixth avenues and 110th and 112th streets, was just the one that suited his fancy. But how to get it was a question that puzzled Mutrie. How could he approach the polo club people and would they take stock in a ball club? They listened patiently to what Mutrie had to say on the subject, and there it ended, at least so it seemed to James. Finally, after several interviews, Mutrie did succeed in getting Messrs. Belmont, Lorillard, Jerome and other prominent members interested to the extent that they agreed to give Mutrie the refusal of a lease on the grounds until he succeeded in getting a financial backer.

Then Mutrie's troubles had just begun, for this was the hardest work of any he had undertaken. With practically a lease of the finest site in New York in his pocket, he visited many prominent men in the financial and commercial world, but not one of them would take any stock in the enterprise. They argued that baseball was as dead as a door nail and could never be made a paying investment in this city. They treated Mutrie as if he had escaped from some asylum, and advised him to give up his scheme. Footsore and weary but nothing daunted, Mutrie kept up his search. In sheer desperation he called on A. B. (June) Rankin, then a baseball writer, and through him met Mr. John B. Day, who at one time had owned and pitched for the Orange (N.J.) team. Mr. Day then was in business in Maiden lane. It did not take long to arrange the preliminary details, and then it did not take Mutrie long in getting to Washington to sign the players of the Rochester team, who were stranded there.

The new club was named the Metropolitan and the team took the field for its first game on September 15, 1880, when on the Union Grounds, Brooklyn, it had a nine of the Union Club as opponents, the Unions being without the services of Joe Farrell, Troy, O'Neil, Pike and Nelson, the last named having signed with the Metropolitans. The new Metropolitans included Brady, Farrell, Hawes, Deasley, Kennedy and Daly, late of the Rochesters; Esterbrook and Walker, from the Buffalo National League Club, and Jack Nelson. The "Mets," as they were afterward termed, were attired in white suits trimmed with blue, and bright blue stockings. One-armed Daly was on the slab for the Mets, and he pitched a superb game, holding the Unions down to three hits and no runs, while the Mets piled up thirteen tallies. The following day the Mets again won, this time by a score of 15 to 0. On the 17th and 18th the Mets tackled the Brooklyns and defeated them by scores of 3 to 0 and 7 to 5, respectively. Then from September 20 to the 27th, inclusive, the Mets met the Jersey Citys on the Union Grounds and defeated them by scores of 4 to 3, 14 to 4, 6 to 3, 8 to 0, 10 to 4 and 15 to 5.

In the meantime the Polo Grounds were being put in condition for ball playing purposes. Manager Mutrie had obtained a lease covering some years, with a renewal option. At last everything was ready for the opening game between the Mets and the Nationals of Washington, set for September 29. It was the most noteworthy event that ever happened in baseball in this city, it being the opening of the first professional ball field New York ever had. Hitherto New Yorkers had to go to the Capitoline or Union Grounds in Brooklyn to witness the professional teams of the preceding ten years. The people could not realize it to be a fact, and only 2,500 persons purchased tickets and passed through the gates. This crowd, however, was the largest that had gathered to see a professional match in this vicinity since the Centennial year. It was an exceptional attendance, both in relation to numbers and respectability, there being many women in the grand stand.

The game had been advertised to start at 3.30 p. m., at which time the Mets were on the field ready to play. The non-arrival of the Nationals, however, delayed matters so long that the previously quiet and orderly crowd in the grand stand became impatient and started to shout "Play the game or refund our money!" Finally, after 4 o'clock passed and the Nationals had failed to appear, it was decided that rather than disappoint the people a picked team would be selected to play the Mets in place of the Nationals. This proposition was accepted by about one-third of the crowd, while the other two-thirds clamored for their money. It was found, however, that more than half of the tickets had been sold by the elevated railroad company, and that no money could be refunded without an actual loss to the club management. When it began to look as if there would be trouble there was a commotion over by the Sixth avenue gates, and the Nationals were seen coming on the field in an omnibus. That ended the dilemma. With a rush for seats and a hearty round of applause the crowd settled down and the Nationals drove over to the diamond and alighted.

It was 4.18 p. m. when the Mets went to bat and scored a run on a three-bagger by Bradley and an error by Smiley. They scored again in the second inning, and the Nationals in that round got two men over the plate. No more runs were made until the fifth inning, when the Mets made a brace of tallies. It was then getting on toward dusk. The Mets harvested two more runs in the fifth and the Nationals were blanked, and then the game was called on account of darkness. [Thus ended] the first professional game ever played on Manhattan Island . . .