

Originals.

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

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THE MONTH IN 19cBB

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

INQUIRIES

Silver Ball Championship - Definition

John Zinn sent a request for a definition of a Silver Ball championship. Craig Waff responded with some references in the *Clipper* to a Silver Ball proposal in the 1850s and a Silver Ball game of 1861, which David Dyte elaborated on. Bob Tholkes added references from 1859 and suggested that the concept grew out of using game balls as trophies. John Thorn then provided references to two competitions, one in New England and the other in San Francisco. John Payne forwarded a later reference (1878) from the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Another Term

Deb Shattuck inquired why 19th-century articles about womens' baseball games are peppered with references to the "bald-headed men" attending the games. John Thorn opined

that it is inferred that the ladies attracted a number of older voyeurs. George Thompson and then Dick McBane posted similar contemporary references from two other forms of entertainment. Deb sent another article in which the term was also used to refer to womens' rights activists. George came back with an alternative meaning of the term from the OED.

Eagles and Empires, 1869

Richard Hershberger sent a mention of an 1869 match between the two clubs, a later date than expected, and asked for any information on their later history. John Thorn supplied a link to an 1871 published source on the Eagles.

Jim Creighton and Civil War exemption

Jonathan Frankel asked if anyone knew if Creighton or his club had paid the \$300 to allow him to avoid service in the war.

DISCOVERIES

Daisy-cutter

John Thorn found an 1842 reference to the base ball slang term favored by the "Father of Baseball". Skip McAfee resorted to the OED, which lists the term as originating in the 18th Century and, as with

John's reference, referring to trotting horses.

Early Australian Baseball Reference

Eric Miklich sent an 1855 note complaining of boys playing "base-ball" on the Sabbath day in Australia. Richard Hershberger sent the opinion that it was a survival of English base-ball or an outgrowth from American emigration. Bob Tholkes favored the British option.

playing at bandy or ball, Baltimore, 1827

George Thompson posted a Baltimore ordinance of 1827 outlawing play on the Sabbath. John Thorn sent a description, pulled from Protoball, of ball as played in Baltimore in 1825.

Base-Ball Club convention, December 1855

Richard Hershberger sent a *New York Tribune* note about a convention in New York in 1855, and asked if anything more is known of it. John Thorn then posted a later recollection which may refer to the meeting.

Pioneer and Excelsior Base Ball Clubs of Jersey City

Richard Hershberger sent comments on what these two clubs' 1855 match tells us about the progress of the game in the New York metro area. Craig Waff

posted further information about the clubs, the games, and about the players and officials. Richard noted the seeming interconnections among the various forms of the game at this time.

Access 19cBB at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/19cBB>

ORIGINS TRAP-BALL REFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

Tom Altherr follows up his information on new trap-ball references in the last number of the newsletter with the following caveat on their interpretation:

The way I reread the South Carolina newspaper story leads me to be more cautious about what it was saying. The sticking point is that comma after the word Negroes. Was the grand jury simply worried about slaves being in town on Sunday and separately anxious about someone else playing trapball and fives, perhaps whites playing those games? The comma, which is indeed in the original newspaper story, lends a note of ambiguity to the matter. The historians who have referred to this newspaper story all assume that it is proof that slaves (or maybe even a few free blacks) played those two games. Maybe so. Maybe not. Certainly given the scarcity of sources about slaves and recreation, we so want this to be proof. I think all we can safely deduce from the grand

jury complaint is that somebody was playing trapball and fives, maybe on Sundays, maybe on other days, and those some bodies may have been blacks or whites or both. Without corroboration, I don't believe that we can automatically say this is a proof of blacks playing a baseball-type game in South Carolina in 1773.

ORIGINS NEW IN PROTOBALL, CONTINUED

1841.18 – Louisiana Editor Endorses Forming New Clubs for Ballplaying.

1844.10 – Fast Day Game in NH on the Common – Unless Arborism Goes Too Far.

1844.11 – Why Fast Day Comes Only Once a Year, Maybe.

1845.18 – On “Second Anniversary,” The NY Club Plays Intramural Game.

1845.19 – Old Fashioned Ball of Some Type depicted by Painter?

1845.20 – Painting Shows Crossed Bats and Some Balls in School.

1846.17 – English Cricketers Form First National Team.

1846.18 – NYC: Inky Mob of Ballplayers 1, Policeman 0.

1847.9 – Li'l Prince's Birthday Party Includes Cricket, Rounders.

1847.10 – Ice Bowl

1847.11 – Alabaman Mentions “Bass Ball,” Goal

1848.14 – Game of Base Ball Attains Dictionary Perch.

1848.15 English Novel Mentions, Thread-the-Needle, “Base-Ball:” “Such Games!

1849.11 – Fictional Autobiography Character Played Cricket, Base-Ball.

1850s.20- Town-ball As Played in Ohio.

1850s.21 -- “Shoddy” Lord's Opts for Mechanical Grass-Cutter.

1850s.22 -- British Trade Unionists Play Base Ball.

1850s.23 -- English Novel Briefly Mentions Base-Ball

1850s.24 – In NYC – Did “Plugging” Actually Persist to the mid-1850s?

Access the whole Protoball Chronology at:

<http://retrosheet.org/Protoball/chron.htm>

SUBMISSION OF ITEMS.

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