

# Originals.

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## THE MONTH IN 19cBB

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

### ON THE LINKS

#### ***Kensington House in the News, Sort of***

John Thorn posted the link to a picture of the present-day Mount Vernon Hotel, in 1821 part of the Kensington house early base ball site.

#### ***Polish Workers Play Ball at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1609***

John Thorn posted a link to his Our Game blog on the occasion of the first posting to that site of articles from the upcoming Special Origins Issue of his journal, *Base Ball*. Leading off is David Block's essay under the above title, which examines in particular the game of long ball.

### NEWS

#### ***Long Ball game at the Ganondagan State Historic Site***

Priscilla Astifan described a game of longball, which according to a local historian was played by the Seneca, played recently near

Rochester, NY. Jack Little inquired whether Henry Chadwick had claimed an English origin for the game. Skip McAfee sent a 1914 description of a game called "long ball" which was a childish variation on baseball.

### INQUIRIES

#### ***Looking for a Good Quote***

Deb Shattuck inquired for a primary source to quote on the attitude of Americans toward adult participation in games in the first half of the 19th century. Richard Hershberger and John Thorn obliged.

#### ***Stewart's History of Ancient and Modern Games and Pastimes***

Deb Shattuck asked for a source for the above title, which may have references relating to the history of women's participation in bat and ball games. David Block identified the book as Joseph's Strutts' *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, and John Thorn located it in Google Books.

### TANGENT

While searching for a source for the Strutt book, Deb came across a source for many 19th century books called [www.forgottenbooks.com](http://www.forgottenbooks.com), and posted the link.

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## TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

### RETRIBUTION FOR BALL PLAYING IN MASSACHUSETTS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

Sarah Anna Emery, in her autobiography, recorded an example of what she and the community considered heavenly retribution for ball playing on a fast day. According to Emery, people in her Newburyport, Massachusetts area took such days seriously: "I should not have dared to take a needle in hand on Fast Day." But some youths one unspecified early 19th-century year didn't follow the observances. "To the horror of the community," she recalled, "one Fast evening, 'Bartlett's boys' and some other young men went over to 'Gunket,' and played ball after supper. One of the number, Enoch Hale, had the misfortune to sprain his arm, and was unable to work for some months. This was regarded as a special mark of Divine displeasure, a signal judgment for a heinous crime." Sarah Anne Emery, *Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian* (Newburyport, Massachusetts: Will-

iam H. Huse and Company, 1879), p.61.

#### ACADEMIC BALL PLAY IN BATON ROUGE IN THE 1850S

Sometime in the mid- or late 1850s, Thornton Bowman attended the Collegiate Institute in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The life there was often "quite confining and irksome" to Bowman, but occasional recreation offset the drudgery. "We had, however, no few privileges and pleasures," he wrote, "Fine grounds were provided for our ball and other games." T. H. Bowman, *Reminiscences of an Ex-Confederate Soldier or Forty Years on Crutches* (Austin, Texas: Gammel-Statesman Publishing House, 1904), p. 17

#### LONG TOWN BALL IN CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA IN THE 1830s

John Fritz, who went on to a long career as a mechanical engineer, fondly remembered playing what he termed "long town ball" at school in Chester County, Pennsylvania around 1837-1838. "Being handy with the ball, and lively on foot," he wrote, "I was asked by the older boys to take a place with them in their ball game, sometimes called long town ball, the predecessor of modern baseball. In the simplicity of my boyhood days I thought this a very great honor, and imagined it was a great step on the road to manhood, the goal of boys' ambition." A few sentences later, however,

Fritz penned this puzzling statement: "But it was not only in mathematics that I was successful, as I ranked second in the ball game, as it was played at that time." Second in what? Hits? Runs? Fielding? John Fritz, *Autobiography of John Fritz* (New York: pvt. ptg., 1912), pp. 28-29

#### BALL PLAY IN WESTERN ALABAMA IN THE 1840s

Looking back at his boyhood in western Alabama in the 1840s from the vantage point of 1916, educator John Massey explained, "Our games were simple compared with the highly developed games of the present day. They served well, however, for sport and athletic exercise. We played 'cat,' 'town ball,' and 'bull pen'" -all of which had some rules." Alas, Massey didn't spell out what any of those rules were. John Massey, *Reminiscences, Giving Sketches of Scenes Through Which the Author has Passed and Pen Portraits of People Who Have Modified His Life* (Nashville, Tennessee: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1916), p. 30

#### NO BALL-PLAYING AT GENEVA COLLEGE IN 1849

Andrew Dickson White, later the founder of Cornell University, bemoaned the absence of sports at Geneva College when he attended in 1849: "Athletics were unknown; there was no gymnasium, no ball-playing,...." With "no other outlet for the animal spirits of " his classmates, they resorted to such

activities as rolling cannonballs down the dormitory hallways. Andrew Dickson White, *Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White*] (New York: The Century Company, 1905), p. 22

#### CROSSING OUT RUNNERS IN TOWN BALL IN OHIO

In his autobiography, Dr. Thomas H. Barton left a more detailed than usual account of town ball in his schoolboy days in Bedford Township, Meigs County, in southeastern Ohio: ""Athletic sports were the chief sources of recreation among the male portion of the scholars....Town ball, from which the national game originated, was the principal field exercise. An equal number of players was chosen on each side, and the first to bat was decided by chance or mutual agreement. The number of bases was indefinite, and their formation was governed by the contour of the ground on which the game was played. The players were either "crossed out" between the bases, caught out behind the bat, "on a fly," or on the first bound. The curve was unknown; there were no dead balls, and no uniformity as to the number of innings. The inning ended only when all the players on both sides were put out. Disputed points were settled by mutual agreement without the aid of an umpire." Barton's account is interesting on several counts. First, his use of term "crossed out," to my knowledge has not appeared in connection with town ball elsewhere. The term is

missing from Paul Dickson's baseball dictionary, 3rd edition, and also absent from several other dictionaries. Was the term in greater use or a local usage? Did Barton take an 1890 term and apply it retroactively? Did the term imply some sort of record-keeping, maybe crossing names off a list, real or mental, to keep track of batters and innings?

Second, several features of this town ball game differ from the 1858 Dedham rules. Apparently the bound rule was in effect, an aspect usually associated with baseball-type games of the 1840s, the 1850s, and the early 1860s. Was the bound rule more frequent in town ball than we think? Similarly, the statement that the number of bases varied and the field fit the landscape also departed from the assumed regularity of a rectangle of stakes. Did this type of town ball serve as a transition from earlier informal games and more formal town ball or protobaseball games during that decade or two? Third, in many other variants of town ball, innings (half innings?) ended with one striker being put out. In Barton's version, innings may have lasted quite a while, depending on the number of players. Overall there seemed to be a more fluid nature to town ball than the 1858 Dedham rules formulated.

Barton was born in 1828 and first attended school at age six, so most likely his town ball days comprised the mid-1830s and early 1840s.[Thomas H. Barton], *Autobiography of*

*Dr. Thomas H. Barton, The Self-Made Physician of Syracuse, Ohio* (Charleston, West Virginia: West Virginia Printing Company, 1890), p. 14

#### MORE BOWDOIN COLLEGE BALL PLAY IN THE 1820s

We already have Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous quotation about ball play at Bowdoin College in 1824. Another Bowdoin student, Joseph Packard who attended from 1827 to 1831, also noted, "For sport we played ball on the campus..." This was likely a type of baseball game, as Packard wrote elsewhere about his boyhood play: "The game of ball was played, but not reduced to such a system as it now is [circa 1902], and foot ball was not practised." Joseph Packard *Recollections of a Long Life* (Washington, DC: Byron S. Adams, Publisher, 1920), pp. 24 and 37.

#### BALL PLAY IN WEST VIRGINIA

Reminiscing about Martinsburg, Virginia (later West Virginia) during the 1832-1861 period, John W. Curtis recalled what ball games they played: "The sports of the day were of similar character to the present. Boys played town, ring and corner ball." Ring ball, according to one encyclopedia of games, was a progenitor to croquet, but town ball and corner ball were baseball-type games. John W. Curtis, "Historical Reminiscence of Martinsburg, from the Year 1832 to the Year 1861," in F. Vernon Aler, *Aler's History of*

*Martinsburg and Berkeley County West Virginia* (Westminister, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2008 [1888]), p.253.

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## 150 YEARS AGO

*from the pages of the New  
York Sunday Mercury*

*July 7, 1861*

#### BASE BALLERS AT THE SEAT OF WAR-

We had the pleasure, last week, during a flying visit to Washington and the encampments on the Virginia side of the Potomac, to shake hands with a number of base ball players from New York and Brooklyn, who have become "bold soger boys" and who show evident signs of bodily improvement from the active drilling they have recently had in the manual of arms and salt pork...all the baseballers who have gone to the war -- many of whom will soon return, in consequence of the expiration of their term of service-- will be found fully qualified to resume their old positions in their respective first nines. They will have more muscle, more endurance; and play better than ever.

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