

NO NAME YET.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research
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TENTATIVE NEWSLETTER LAUNCH.

Born of a number of loose-jointed emails and a few rambling telephone conversations, the Origins Committee presents to its membership the first number of its proposed periodic newsletter, as yet untitled. Future numbers hopefully will contain a variety of interesting regular features; this first effort introduces one, a summary of the past month's postings about Origins topics on the popular online discussion site 19cBB, compiled for this number of the newsletter by the editor.

Five committee members have volunteered to take part in the newsletter effort: Committee chair Larry McCray; Bob Tholkes, coordinator; and Joanne Hulbert, Marty Payne, and Thomas Simpson. Contact Larry or Bob if you are interested in participating.

Much has yet to be decided concerning the newsletter. We are looking for a clever, apropos name, and invite your suggestions. Frequency of issue is also not finally determined. A number of regular features have been discussed, but these are also not finally determined, and, again, suggestions are invited.

THE MONTH IN 19cBB.

Origins Committee members pursued several threads of interest on the 19cBB yahogroup during the month of February.

MULTIPLE POSTINGS.

Protoball Update. Larry McCray of the Protoball Project provided an update on the Protoball chronology. Larry reported 200 additions to the chronology for version 9. Topical chronologies have been added under such headings as "town ball" and "local prohibitions against ballplaying". Craig Waff is building a chronology of known pre-Civil War matches. Follow-up posts under this head included a detailed description of the match tabulation project by Craig; others concerned means of avoiding duplication of work and the advisability of constructing a bibliography. Postings about sources resulted in a suggestion that SABR extend its holdings of the *New York Clipper*; this was forwarded to the SABR office.

Base Ball, or What You Call Rounders. Richard Hershberger initiated a lengthy series of posts about the relationship

between base ball and rounders by quoting an English article of 1858 which equated them instead of confirming that one descended from the other. Points raised in response concerned evidence of Chadwick's actual view of the subject, the timing and possible reasons why rounders succeeded base ball as the name of the game in England in the 19th century, and evidence that tut was another name also used for the same game. Not surprisingly, the question of baseball's relationship to rounders was not resolved.

Base Ball as a Social Fraternity. Craig Waff's observation that base ball clubs retained their character as social fraternities as late as 1859 provoked a review of the research, primarily by David Ball and Richard Hershberger and primarily concerning the 1870s, when professional clubs proliferated and the number and prominence of clubs primarily organized as social fraternities declined.

Sunday Ballplaying. Larry McCray answered an inquiry about Sunday ballplaying, summarizing the entries in the subchronology of the Protoball Chronology entitled "sabbatariology". Several subsequent responses leapfrogged out

of the Origins period to the 1880s and 1890s. Charlie Bevis supplied a reference to his book on the subject, Sunday Baseball: The Major Leagues' Struggles to Play on the Lord's Day, 1876-1934. In a related posting, *Testing the Sabbath law: 1841*, Richard Hershberger cited evidence of a protest against New York's City law.

REVIVALS.

Lunatics Playing Base Ball - 1846. Richard Hershberger's original posting last Halloween of citations indicating a belief in the Protoball period in the therapeutic value of base ball for asylum inmates was augmented in February by an additional citation posted by George Thompson. (ed. note- a present-day Indiana vintage base ball club, the Wood County Infirmary Inmates, carries on the tradition.)

TONGUE IN CHEEK.

About Ballplaying and Character Building. Larry McCray's post about the "stupendous number of Great Americans" who were involved with the game in the Protoball era (The Protoball Chronology contains a subchronology) drew an immediate request for a similar subchronology of Not-So-Great Americans as well as other flashes of wit, and references to bank robber John Dillinger and King George III of Great Britain and Ireland and etc., whose names do not often appear in tandem.

DISCOVERIES.

Antedating game of wicket.

Richard Hershberger cited an English reference of 1786 to the game of wicket, the first such reference, he believes, found on that side of the Atlantic.

Earliest use of a base ball metaphor.

Richard Hershberger cited a New York City newspaper article which used a base ball allusion, "the third time and 'out', as the boys say in ball".

A Reversal. John Thorn noted that his finding in his 1992 biography of Doc Adams that the earliest date for a baseball-ancestor game in New York City was 1840-41 has been superseded; he now believes the date is before 1839, when Adams arrived in the city.

Baseball in South Carolina, Early 1860s(?).

George Thompson posted a passage from a collection of 1930s interviews with former slaves. The passage contains an anecdote from the first match played "in Woodward section".

18th Century Baseball.

John Thorn posted a 1903 item in a New York State paper, an anonymous message from one ball club to another which makes a mysterious reference to "the eighteenth century rules of baseball".

SOURCE NOTES.

New search terms on ancestry.com. Mark Aubrey reported good results from entering "Ball Player" as a search term when searching in

ancestry.com for city directories. John Thorn responded to suggest searching also under the usual variations of "base ball" and "ball player" in censuses.

Use of the word baseball before 1845. In response to an inquiry David Block reported on the online availability of copies of the 1760 (10th) edition of A Little Pretty Pocket Book.

REFERENCE WORKS.

Use of the word baseball before 1845. David Block posted the link to his latest "exercise", a list of all known references in all sources to the term "baseball" and including all spelling variations, up to 1845. David requested additions and corrections.

TANGENTS.

David Block's posting *Use of the word baseball before 1845* took a few different directions, David having mentioned in passing that "By the early 19th century, baseball in Britain had taken on a character that was quite different from its counterpart in the United States", Richard Hershberger requested a clarification of the meaning of "character" in David's context; David replied that an exposition of the differences he has in mind is in progress.

Sydneysider Beth Hise also posted an inquiry: was North America the only outpost of Empire to which base ball was transplanted during baseball's "proto" period?

What of South Africa,
India, New Zealand, etc.?