

# ORIGINALS.

Newsletter of the Origins Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research  
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## THE MONTH IN 19cBB.

Origins Committee members pursued several threads of interest on the 19cBB yahoo group during the month of March.

### REFERENCE WORKS.

My Amazon review of the new Peter Morris book. Richard Hershberger shared his review of *But Didn't We Have Fun*, Peter Morris's latest.

### WHIMSY.

What NASA Jargon Owes To Early Base Ball Writing. Craig Waff posted a quote from Porter's *Spirit of the Times* which found an echo in our time: "These clubs are made up of youngsters of the right stuff." Richard Hershberger responded to remind that the expression was in general usage by the date of Craig's quote (1856).

Base Ball in Cleveland. Craig Waff, finding an 1857 incident in Porter's of authorities in Cleveland hesitating over whether or not a law existed prohibiting games of ball on public places, such as the public square in the Ohio city. Craig could have solved the mystery for them, as he also cites an 1845 Protoball Chronology

entry describing the enactment of such a law.

### DISCOVERIES.

A glimpse of the Elysian Fields in 1853. George Thompson furnished a lengthy, idyllic description of the Elysian Fields from an 1854 volume on the delights of New York City. A ball game was in progress and the players were briefly described.

Post-dating purely English "base ball". On the previously-raised subject (see the February summary in the last newsletter) of when "rounders" supplanted "base ball" in English nomenclature, Richard Hershberger reported a later reference to the latter than was previously known to him, in 1862. David Ball replied and expanded the subject, noting that Richard's reference supports Gould's division of England into three sections where the game had different names, and inquiring if any references existed to the third name, "feeder". Richard responded that another factor is that the name "base ball" predominated in the more urbanized south and east of England, from which we have more sources. At discussion's end, both agreed that the question of the spread of "rounders" from western

England remains open. Andrew Schiff noted that Chadwick apparently did not explain the nomenclature either.

### FEEDER FRENZY.

Feeder = Rounders? Posting information supplied him offline by David Block, Richard Hershberger concluded that the evidence equating feeder with rounders is inconclusive. David replied with his conclusion, which was that the games had commonalities but have not been proved identical. David Ball considered that feeder may be more equivalent to the various cat games, but that its existence in different regions than rounders has rendered comparison less certain. In a later posting Richard also observed that, in contrast to rounders and base ball, we know feeder solely from descriptions in books. David Ball also inquired if American and Canadian football, both considered football but with significant differences, is an analogous case. Richard responded that the existence of codified rules and separate histories rendered them distinct, but allowed that the distinction rested on arbitrary definitions. Christopher Green responded that the answer depended on the scope of

the comparison, and commented generally on the necessarily arbitrary nature of fixing a point of origin. From her perch in Sydney, Beth Hise posted a description of two surviving variations of cricket played by Australian children which contain elements of feeder.

#### MARKING TIME.

Sesquicentennial. Fred Ivor-Campbell called attention to the imminent (March 24) 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark 1858 convention at which the NABBP as formally organized, and when the rules were first amended to provide for the calling of strikes and the possibility of strikeouts on called strikes. Joanne Hulbert pointed out that in 1858 also the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players published official rules for the Massachusetts Game, and that a commemorative game will be held May 10 on Boston Common.

#### SOURCE NOTES.

Genealogy Bank Expands Online Historical Newspaper Collection. Mark Aubrey's subject heading said it all. NY Clipper online. Richard Malatazky posted a URL through which he reported that the New York Clipper can be accessed, a fact corroborated by John Thorn. Both testified to the tedious nature of the process.



## MR. MORRIS' LATEST REVIEWED.

Award-winning author Peter Morris' latest work *But Didn't We Have Fun*, is here reviewed by Origins Committee member Tom Simpson.

When Alexander Cartwright presented his 20 rules of play to his ball-playing friends, he did not intend to initiate a new game to the fields of New York or young America. Instead, Cartwright sought only to bring more order and organization to a ball-playing group of young men soon to be known as the Knickerbockers. For them, playing rounders or one old cat was sufficient. Cartwright's rules were not readily accepted, for the young men assembled purely for the task of fun and outdoor exercise. However, in time, Cartwright prevailed and so began the origins of modern baseball.

Peter Morris, in an excellent, thoroughly researched and documented history, leads us into and through the infancy of baseball and then into and past the adolescent days of baseball's pioneer era. The 1843-1870 amateur period was initially accented with fun and entertainment. But then, during this period, the game slowly, but surely, became contaminated by the encroaching elements of

serious competition and professionalism. The paying and recruitment of ballplayers brought a serious side to the national game that stunted the earlier elements of leisure and pleasure. Baseball had now grown up. The pioneer era was over.

*But Didn't We Have Fun* contrasts itself with previous historical renderings on the origin of baseball. Peter Morris imbues the reader with the feeling of personal experience with this pioneer era. Who has not played with makeshift bats and bases? Or played with balls re-sewn or taped and softened through countless strikes of the bat? Or dealt with having to alter rules to adjust to limited playing space and, perhaps, having only six or seven participants? For the men and women of 1843-1870, baseball was synonymous with fun, friendship, and enjoyment. They did "have fun." But then, at picnics, on school grounds, in parks, or on vacant fields, don't we as well?

## AT SABR.

Larry McCray advises that the Origins Committee meeting at the SABR convention in Cleveland will take place on Friday morning, June 27, at 8:30 a.m.

## IN VERSE.

Big Al, a slugger from Nantucket  
Swung so hard he really could crush it.  
But when thrown a big curve  
He just had not the nerve  
To keep from stepping in the bucket.

Tom Simpson