# Originals.

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

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## NOS MORITURI TE SALUTAMUS

*By the editor of* Originals*, Bob Tholkes:*

The resignation of Larry McCray as Origins Committee chair, announced at the committee meeting at SABR 42 in June, and subsequent offer to me of the position prompted me, in an effort to survey the committee's more active members, to circulate an email to the individuals who have contributed to postings regarding origins topics in the 19cBB group this year, asking if the committee has a reason to continue to exist.

The almost complete lack of response seeming to answer the question, I have decided to decline the proffered chairmanship, and, anticipating that the committee will not continue, to cease publication of this newsletter, effective with this, the final issue.

Thanks are owed to the few dozens who have down loaded *Originals* on a regular basis, and particularly to contributor Tom Altherr who hopefully will continue to unearth previously unlisted references to ball during the origins period, and forward them to the Protoball Project.

It has been my pleasure to serve as editor. Research on the game's origins remains among the most vibrant in the SABR spectrum of activities.

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## TOM ALTHERR'S NOTEBOOK

### BAT AND BALL IN AN 1848 CHILDREN'S BOOK

*The Pleasant Journey*, an 1848 children's book, featured a small illustration of two boys playing a bat and ball game. *The Pleasant Journey; and Scenes in Town and Country* (New Haven, Connecticut: Stephen Babcock, 1848), p. 37

### TRAP BALL IN 1825 & 1830 CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The 1825 edition of *Youthful Sports* commended trap ball directly. Under an illustration of four lads playing the game ran the following verse and commentary:

This is a pleasing, healthy sport,
To which most boys with glee resort.
When young *Francis* knocks the ball,
Catch it, *Billy*, or it will fall.

How delightful it is, on a fine spring day, to see boys actively engaged at this play! It strengthens their arms, exercises their legs, and adds pleasure to the mind.

In the 1830 edition, the authors envision trap ball as an antidote to agricultural and industrial work for child laborers: "To play with *Battledore* and *Shuttlecock*, or with a *Trap* and *Ball*, is good exercise: and if we had it in our power to grant, not only to the children of the affluent, but even such of the poor as are impelled by necessity to pick cotton, card wool, to sit and spin or reel all day, should have at least one hour, morning and evening for some youthful recreation...."

*Youthful Sports* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1825), p. 4 and *Youthful Sports* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1830), pp. 4-5

### MORE TRAP BALL

In a thinly fictionalized account of one Jonathan Drew, historian Christopher Ward listed trap ball among the "innocent" "doings" that his protagonist indulged in as a boy in the Worcester, Massachusetts area around the 1810s. It is unclear whether Ward, an historian of the Revolutionary War and Early Republic, worked with an extant set of memoirs or

drew on his widespread study of the those decades and assumed that trap ball was a common game.
Christopher Ward, *The Strange Adventures of Jonathan Drew, A Rolling Stone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932), p. 9

SCHOOL BEFORE BAT AND BALL, SAID AN 1820 CHILDREN'S BOOK

The 1820 volume, *A Present for a Good Child* cautioned boys to turn away from bat and ball games to concentrate on academics. In an essay entitled "The Scholar" came this admonition: "This youth has laid aside his bat and ball and is pursueing [sic] his studies. It is the way to be a good scholar and to be respected by all." A wonderful woodcut accompanied the text and showed the student holding a book with his bat, which resembled a cricket bat, and ball at his side.
*A Present for a Good Child* (Phila., PA: William Charles, 1820), unpaginated.

ANOTHER CHILDREN'S BOOK WARNING ABOUT BAT AND BALL

An 1822 moral advice book for children, *The Child's Instructer* [sic], told of an irresponsible boy named Jemmy who during errands sometimes "would go off with other boys to play marbles or bat and ball and be gone a whole afternoon."
*The Child's Instructer, and Moral Primer* (Portland, Maine: A. W. Thayer, 1822), p. 29

ABOLITIONIST ARTHUR TAPPAN PLAYED BALL IN THE 1790S

Arthur Tappan, an energetic abolitionist, growing up in Northampton, Massachusetts in the 1790s, "had his full share of frolics, amusements, and occupations of boyhood," including "ball playing," according to his biographer. These activities supposedly "gave a charm to his youthful days, and laid the foundation of whatever hardiness of constitution, and general health he enjoyed in after years."
[Lewis Tappan], *The Life of Arthur Tappan* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 28

DANGERS OF BALL PLAY IN CONNECTICUT CIRCA 1814

Horace White, a biographer of Lyman Trumbull, later an Illinois politician, described how ball play almost cost Trumbull his life while growing up in Colchester, Connecticut in about 1814: " When about thirteen years old he was playing ball one cold day in the family yard. The well had a low curbing around it and was covered by a round flat stone with a round hole in the top of it. He ran towards the well for the ball, which he picked up and threw quickly. As he did his foot slipped on the ice and he went head first down the well." All ended well, however, as his brothers rescued him.
Horace White, *The Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), p. 3

A BAN ON BALL PLAY IN ALBANY IN 1779

A history of Albany, New York included the following 1779 proposed ordinance: "March 8. Resolved that an Ordinance to prevent the playing at Ball against the Churches or Houses of public Worship in this City be immediately published and that copies be put up at such Houses of Worship." The games could have been fives or handball, but the ambiguity of the word "against" allows for the possibility of other ball games.
[Joel Munsell], *Collections on the History of Albany, from Its Discovery to the Present Time* (Albany: Joel Musnell, 1865, vol. 1, p. 293

CATHARINE BEECHER SOUNDED OFF AGAINST WORKERS PLAYING BALL AFTER WORK

The ubiquitous mid-19th-century moralist Catharine Beecher took a dim view of workers resorting to ball play after a day's labor. Having already declared that amusement should "refresh and invigorate the mind," Beecher wrote in 1841, "If a laboring man should come home after his day's toil and go to playing ball," that would violate her philosophy of recreation.
Catharine Beecher, *The Moral Instructor; for Schools and Families: Containing Lessons on the Duties of Life* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1841) p. 134

# THE MONTH IN 19cBB

Members of the Origins Committee used the 19cBB yahoogroup sparingly during the mideason month of July.

***A young fan at the Elysian Fields in the 1850s***

George Thompson posted a note from a 1920s memoir by a New York woman who remembered seeing ball games at Hoboken.

***Prep School - High School Base Ball***

John Zinn posted a request for instances of base ball reported at prep institutions, having found two dating from 1858 in New Jersey. Paula Krimsky, David Dyte, Brian Turner, Deb Shattuck, and John Thorn replied with examples. Larry McCray listed the earliest related Protoball entry and suggested a sub-category in Protoball for early scholastic teams.

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# BLOGOSPHERE

***Barn Ball***

John Thorn posted on "Our Game" on July 30 Tom Altherr's article on barn ball which appeared in 2001 in *Base Ball*.

***Early Base ball in Boston***

John Thorn posted on "Our Game" a 1905 history of the beginnings of the New York Game in Beantown. The item appeared in three parts on July 6-8.

***Ball Days, A Song of 1858***

John Thorn posted on "Our Game" the song "Ball Days", reportedly sung at an Excelsior-Knickerbocker post -game dinner, and composed by a Knickerbocker member, James Whyte Davis. This appeared on July 18.

***Battingball Games***
and
***Rural Ritual Games in Libya (Berber Baseball and Shinny)***

John Thorn posted on "Our Game" July 24-25 these "seminal articles" of 1939 and 1941.

***The Amazing Francis Willughby, and the Role of Stoolball in the Evolution of Baseball and Cricket***

Continuing his steady march backward in time, John Thorn posted on "Our Game" on July 27 the recent article by Larry McCray on stoolball as a common ancestor of base ball and cricket.

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# 150 YEARS AGO

*from the pages of the* New York Clipper

*August 2, 1862 (report on match between Excelsior Club of South Brooklyn and Union Club of Morrisania, won by the Union Club, 12-4)*

The question will naturally be asked, how came the Unions to score so well against Creighton's pitching? and the reply is, that they waited until they got a ball to suit them, Creighton delivering, on an average, 20 or 30 balls to each striker in four of the six innings played. This is the secret of batting successfully against Creighton. The effectiveness of his pitching lays in the great command he has over the ball in delivery; this, together with his speed, makes him successful against all ordinary batsmen. He pitches with judgment, calculates his distance well, and sends in his balls according to the man he has to face him. The *modus operandi* is this: Suppose you want a low ball and you ask him to give you one, you prepare yourself to strike, and in comes the ball at the right height, but out of reach for a good hit. You again prepare yourself, and in comes another, just what you want, save that it is too close. This goes on, ball after ball, until he sees you unprepared to strike, and then in comes the very ball you want, and perhaps you make a hasty strike and either miss it or tip out. If you do neither and go on waiting, the good balls that you are apparently getting-- for outsiders cannot judge whether they are out of reach or too close in; all they can judge of being their height-- leads to comments on your being so long at the bat, and being tired and impatient you strike without judgment, and "foul out" or "three strikes out" is the invariable result.

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