

# Baseball Origins Newsletter

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The baseball origins newsletter is put out by members of SABR's Origins Committee, and the website for baseball's origins, [www.protoball.org](http://www.protoball.org). It is intended to foster research and discussion of the origins of the game of baseball, baseball's predecessor bat-ball games, and the growth of baseball prior to 1871 (when professional, league baseball was founded).

Comments, suggestions and articles should be submitted to Bruce Allardice, editor, at [bsa1861@att.net](mailto:bsa1861@att.net) or Larry McCray at [lmccray@mit.edu](mailto:lmccray@mit.edu).

# Opening Day in Newark, NJ -- 1855

By John Zinn

On June 13, 1855, an unnamed reporter for the *Newark Daily Advertiser* received an unprecedented assignment. His task was to write a brief article about two baseball games. While that might seem like anything out of the ordinary today, it was a first not only for the reporter, but for all New Jersey newspapers because one of the games was the first match game between two New Jersey teams. "Brief," in this case, was meant quite literally. Newspapers of the period consisted of four pages, most of which was absorbed by ads and public notices. Much of the remaining space was dedicated to paper's primary mission, promoting the position of a specific political party. As a result, our unidentified journalist had only space for a few sentences to report on two games. To make things more difficult, there was a major difference between the two games that required explanation.

**BASE BALL.**—A match was played yesterday at Hoboken, between nine of the Empire and Eagle clubs, of New York, which resulted in favor of the former. The game consisted of 21 aces, and 3 hands out, all out. The Empires made game in 7 innings, against 19 by the Eagles. The Newark club in a game on Wednesday in East Newark, with nine players, made 23 aces in one inning, and the Orientals the following day, with six players made 28 aces in one inning.

*Newark Daily Advertiser* – June 16, 1855

The reporter began by describing a seven-inning game between two New York teams, where the Empire Club defeated the Eagle Club 21-19. In order to prepare his readers for a very different second game, he noted that the New York game "consisted [of rules] of 21 aces, and 3 hands out, all out."<sup>1</sup> That is, there were three out per side each inning and the first team to score 21 aces or runs was the winner. The sentence was necessary because in the second match was very different. In the game between New Jersey teams, "The Newark Club ... with nine players, made 23 aces in one inning" while the opposing Oriental Club (soon to become the Olympic Club) on "the following day, with six players, made 28 aces in one inning."<sup>2</sup> While the paper's readers likely weren't very knowledgeable about baseball, the difference between a 28-23 one inning game and a 21-19 seven inning contest couldn't be left unexplained.

By adding the brief explanation of how the New York match was played, the writer, at least by implication, informed his readers that the two games weren't played by the same rules. His omission of an explanation of the New Jersey game's rules may be due to a lack of space or perhaps a knowledge of those rules. In any event, it's clear this first opening day baseball game in New Jersey wasn't played by the Knickerbocker rules used by the New York teams. While the New Jersey players were surely less proficient than their New York counterparts, that can't explain why both Newark teams scored more runs in one inning than the two New York teams could score in seven. A far more likely explanation is the Newark game was played by rules where every player had to be put out for the side to be retired. If so, the Newark Club got only nine outs while the Oriental team had only six, which hardly seems fair, but it didn't stop them from winning.



Newark's first match baseball game was likely played to the right of this picture, near today's railroad bridge over the Passaic River

This is fairly strong evidence that when the New York game was introduced in New Jersey, it didn't enter a vacuum. Other bat and ball games, sometimes called town ball or even baseball, had been played in the state for some time.<sup>3</sup> It's understandable, therefore, that the first New Jersey baseball teams needed time to transition to the Knickerbocker rules. There was, after all, no standardized rule book they could consult. The Newark teams seem to have made the transition relatively quickly, but not so the first Jersey City teams. This is surprising since New York players attended early Jersey City match games and offered guidance and support to the first Hudson County teams.<sup>4</sup>

The first newspaper accounts of Jersey City games describe the inter-club matches of the Jersey City club which became the Pioneer Club. On three different days between June 23 and July 12, 1855, the club played 10 games, all of which were won by a team that scored 21 runs. The number of players on a side varied, but there was always an equal number.<sup>5</sup> The winning score of 21 complies with the Knickerbocker rules while the different number of players might be explained as equal sides of those present. It's unlikely though that these games were in complete accordance with the Knickerbocker rules. On each day, the teams played multiple games, including five games on July 11. Playing that many games in one day suggests more than three outs an inning, significantly reducing the number of innings needed to reach 21.<sup>6</sup>

Any remote possibility these games were played by the Knickerbocker Club's rules was ruled out on August 15, 1855, when the Pioneers played their first match games against the Excelsior Club, Jersey City's other leading team. In the first matches between two Jersey City teams, the Excelsiors prevailed twice 21-16 and 46-19. Obviously the second score does not follow the Knickerbocker rules nor does the use of 11 players on a side in that contest. That the clubs considered 11 the norm was confirmed by the *Jersey City Daily Telegraph's* comment that there were only nine players on a side in the first game because the teams were shorthanded.<sup>7</sup> A number of players from the New York clubs were present, but their efforts, if any, to get the local teams to change their ways bore little fruit. Less than a week later, the Pioneer and Excelsior Clubs met again in a 49-25 Excelsior victory in an 11-inning game, with 11 players on a side.<sup>8</sup> Things got even more extreme on September 6 when the Excelsior crushed the Pavonia Club 83-18 in a "match [that] was to be 2 ½ hours, equal innings," again with 11 on a side. As on August 15<sup>th</sup>, "many experienced players witnessed the game."<sup>9</sup>

BASE BALL.—Two of the new clubs lately formed in this city played their first match, in a field pleasantly situated between this city and Hoboken. The weather was cool and pleasant, and visitors from this city, New York and Brooklyn flocked to see the play. Among them was Mr. Wadsworth, of the Knickerhocker, Mr. D. Godwin, President of the Putnam Club, East Brooklyn, and several members of the Gotham, Eagle, etc. The two clubs that contested were the Pioneer and the Excelsior, both lately organized, and with a little more practice will come out strong—some of their fielding at present is very loose. Excelsior were greatly victorious—winning by long odds both games. The first game was played with only nine men—two from each club being absent. The second game had eleven on a side, and they played eight innings each. The following was the score at close:—

PIONEER CLUB.		EXCELSIOR CLUB.			
Games.		Games.			
1st.	2d.	1st	2d.		
D. S. Gregory, Jr.	0	0	W. C. Hutton . . . 4	5	
J. J. Burgess . . . .	1	1	C. Van Brunt . . . 3	5	
A. Bahe . . . . .	1	2	C. Hutton . . . . 3	4	
P. Marsh . . . . .	3	1	C. J. Farley . . . . 3	3	
P. Rogers . . . . .	2	0	J. Marshall . . . . 3	3	
A. Reynolds . . . .	2	4	R. Gillman . . . . . 1	4	
W. Smart . . . . .	3	4	J. C. Kettle . . . . . 1	4	
J. J. Boyce . . . . .	2	1	W. H. Taylor . . . . 2	5	
A. J. Bixby . . . . .	2	2	A. Williams . . . . . 1	4	
Brown . . . . .	-	2	Rosevelt . . . . .	-	
Jordan . . . . .	-	2	Harris . . . . .	-	
Total . . . . . 16		19		Total . . . . . 21	46
Pitcher . . . . . Burgess		Pitcher . . . . . Van Brunt			
Catcher . . . . . Gregory		Catcher . . . . . W. C. Hutton			
Judge . . . . . Dr. Dummer		Judge . . . . . Rec. Cutter			
Referee—Mr. S. L. Calverly, of Columbia Club, E. B.					

*Jersey City Daily Telegraph* – August 16, 1855

Fortunately, by this time, the Jersey City teams had begun converting to the Knickerbocker rules. Just three days earlier, the Pioneer Club lost a 25-17, seven-inning, nine on a side game to the Columbia Club of East Brooklyn.<sup>10</sup> As their horizons expanded beyond Jersey City, the Pioneer and Excelsior Clubs had to fall into line with what passed for standardized rules, like it or not. Why though did it take so long for the Jersey City teams to conform? Since New York club players were attending their games, a lack of knowledge of the rules is unlikely. There are, of course, many potential explanations, but one interesting possibility is they simply preferred the other version. After all, high scoring games, mean more times at bat, and what player ever felt he had too many chances to hit.

**The old style of Base Ball was played yesterday by a company on the South Park, in the presence of a large number of persons. The sides were 16 men each, under the command of W. A. Brintzinger and Jos. Trawin respectively. The score was Brintzinger 98, Trawin 77.**

*Newark Daily Advertiser* – October 31, 1857

In 1855, the rules the New York clubs used at Elysian Fields weren't widely known. And even if they were, new clubs were not in any way obligated to follow those rules unless they wanted to play New York or Brooklyn teams. It's worth noting that the Antiquarian Knickerbocker Club of Newark, devoted to playing "the old style [of] the game," began playing inter-club matches in 1857 and continued to do so sporadically through the 1870s.<sup>11</sup> Captaining one side in the club's early matches was Joseph Trawin who played for the Oriental/Olympic Club in 1855.<sup>12</sup> Exactly why Trawin opted out of the New York game for "the old style" isn't known, but he may simply have preferred it. This, is, of course, pure speculation, but if the opening of New Jersey's first baseball season in 1855 was accompanied by a debate over what rules were better, it's not a lot different than the beginning of the 2023 season. Another illustration of how baseball is ever changing, but eternally the same.

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<sup>1</sup> *Newark Daily Advertiser*, June 16, 1855, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Newark Daily Advertiser*, June 16, 1855, 2.

<sup>3</sup> John G. Zinn, *A Cradle of the National Pastime: New Jersey Baseball, 1855-1880*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Morven Museum and Gardens, 2019), 18.

<sup>3</sup> John Zinn, "Elysian Fields' Impact (or not) on Early New Jersey Baseball," *SABR Baseball Origins Committee Newsletter*, Volume 3, Number 1, January 2023, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Sentinel and Advertiser*, July 12, 1855, the games of June 27, 1855 are listed in what appears to be the *New York Clipper*, but the copy has no date or title. It most likely appeared in June or July 1855.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Sentinel and Advertiser*, July 12, 1855.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, August 16, 1855, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, August 22, 1855, 1.

<sup>9</sup> The Excelsior – Pavonia game account appears in what again appears to be the *New York Clipper*, but no date or title has survived. It most likely appeared in September 1855.

<sup>10</sup> The Columbia – Pioneer game appears in what appears to be the *New York Clipper*, probably September 1855.

<sup>11</sup> *Porter's Spirit of the Times*, November 1857, *Newark Morning Register*, May 30, 1873.



<sup>12</sup> *Newark Daily Advertiser*, October 31, 1857, 2, November 6, 1857, 2, November 7, 1857, *Newark Daily Advertiser*, October 10, 1855, 2.

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## Early Chicago Baseball Grounds

By Richard Smiley

### Prologue

After establishing treaties with the Ottawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi tribes, the area known as Chicago began attracting settlers, primarily due to its role as a portage from the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes. By 1833 it was big enough to become a town and in 1837 be incorporated as a city.

With the spreading service of railroads, several small stockyards were created in and around the city of Chicago. Before construction of the various private stockyards, tavern owners provided pastures and care for cattle herds waiting to be sold. In 1848, a stockyard called the Bulls Head Market was opened to the public alongside the Bulls Head Tavern. The Bulls Head Stock Yards were located at Madison Street and Ogden Avenue (then called Plank Road) on the west side of the city, just west of the modern "Loop."

In 1853, the city created Union Park from 13 acres of a nearby subdivision. The still-standing park is bordered by North Ashland Avenue on the west, West Lake Street on the north, the diagonal North Ogden Avenue along most of the east border, and West Washington Boulevard on the south.<sup>1</sup> Named in honor of the Federal Union, it became one of the city's most fashionable places. Along with Bulls Head, Union Park would be the hub of bat and ball game activity in early Chicago.



## Union Park

Cricket was played in Union Park (modern address: 1501 W. Randolph) as early as 1854. The *Chicago Tribune* documents the arrangement and results of a match that took place on September 27, 1854, between the Chicago and Milwaukee Cricket clubs that “resulted in the favor of the Badger boys by one wicket to run down”. The game was played on the Chicago Club’s “old ground on Union Park.” Specifically, where in Union Park the match was played is on from a little tricky to determine. But references to matches played “near Bulls Head” and on the ground near the Union Park House suggest the matches would have been to the east of the lagoon.

While no specific matches can be referenced, it is very likely these cricket grounds were the first place that organized baseball was played in Chicago. A recap of Chicago history in a 1900 *Chicago Tribune* series identifies it as such and the first documented baseball game in Chicago in 1858 involved a team calling itself the “Unions”. By the time baseball began to get coverage in the papers, the baseball teams had moved on to other locations.

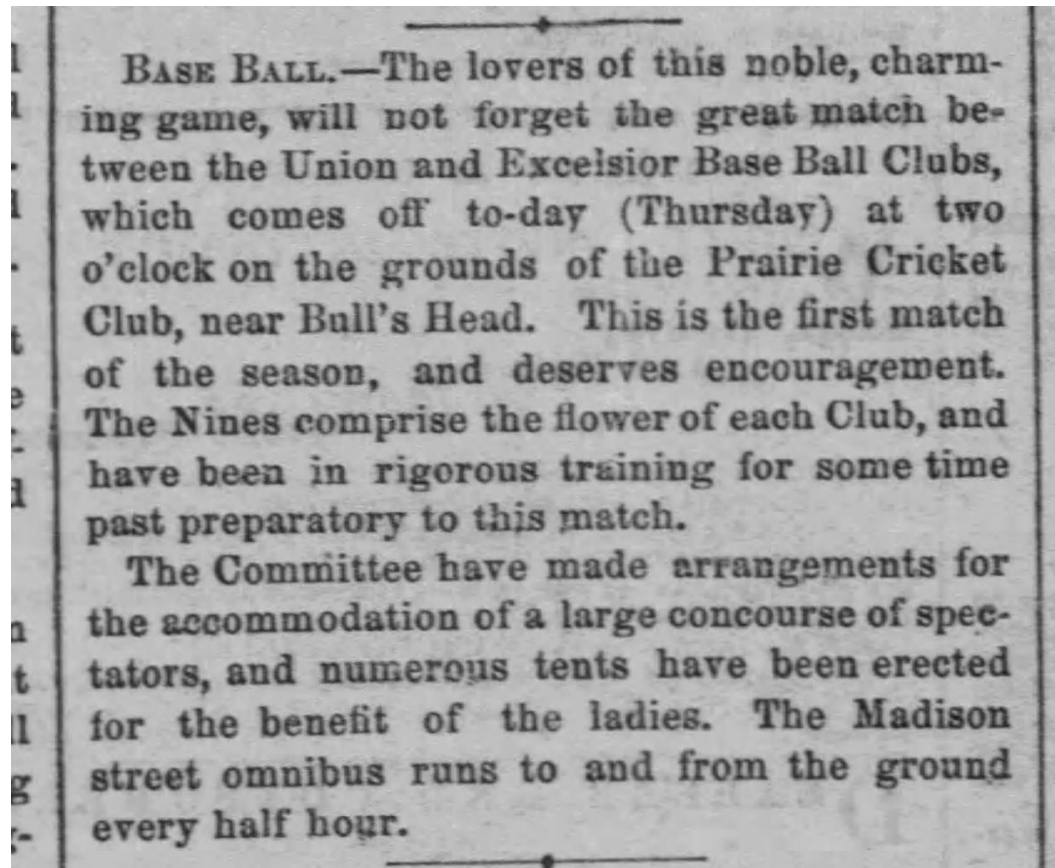




Bull's Head Market  
 Madison Street and Plank Road (Ogden Avenue)  
 Rufus Blanchard  
 1857

## Prairie Cricket Grounds

After departing Union Park, the primary locale for baseball in Chicago during the late 1850's was the Prairie Cricket Grounds. Like the Union Park Grounds, the Prairie Grounds were located near Bulls Head. In this case, the land was situated to the east of the Tavern, bordered by West Madison Street on the south, North Loomis Street (then called Sheldon Street) on the east, and West Washington Boulevard on the north. It is not clear whether the grounds would have extended as far as North Ogden Avenue on the west, but they would have been close to it. The grounds became the main site for games played by the Unions, the Excelsiors, and the Atlantics. In August of 1860, a match between the Excelsiors and the Atlantics was expected to "be witnessed by at least 1,000 persons".



Chicago *Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1858

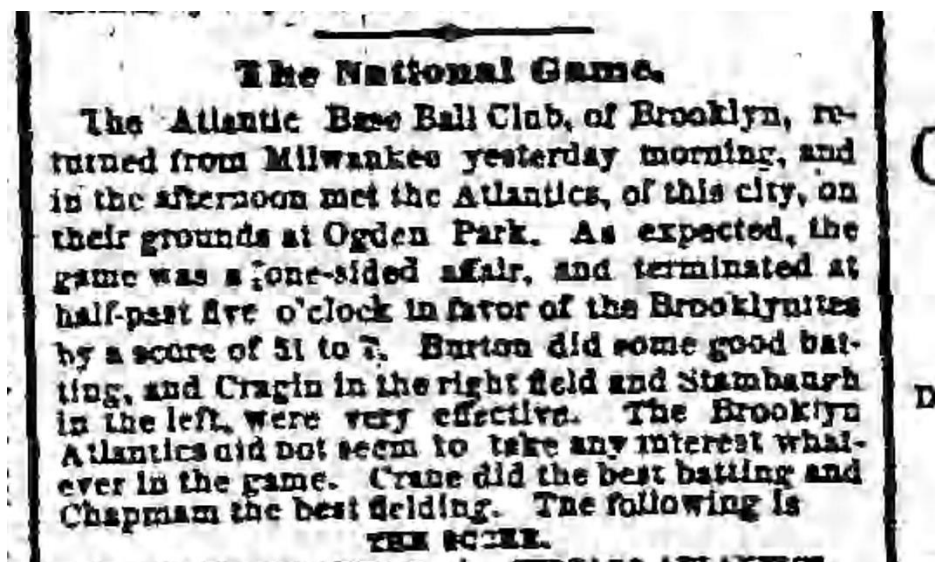
Upon the start of the Civil War, the Prairie Cricket Club disbanded as most of its members went off to join the battle and the grounds fell into disuse. In 1862, a new cricket club called the West Side Club was given permission to use the grounds and baseball temporarily returned to the location. For example, an 1863 match between the Garden City and Osceola clubs was played there. But the baseball teams began to scatter among other west and southwest side locations (such as the Garden City Grounds at May and Taylor) and the cricket grounds disappeared.

### **Ogden Skating Park**

At the end of the Civil War, the Excelsior and Atlantic Clubs became the primary teams in the city. The Excelsiors had established grounds at Lake and May in 1859, while the Atlantics were situated at a couple of locations. In 1867, the Atlantics secured space at the Ogden Skating Park. The park (modern address, approx. 211 E. Ontario) was first referenced in newspapers in 1861, where its location was given as "the foot of Ontario Street", i.e., where Ontario Street met Lake Michigan. Ontario Street was and is north of Chicago's modern "Loop" and then was near the northern boundary of the city. Chicago

City directories for 1867 and 1869-70 give the location of "Ogden Skating Park" as "Ontario, corner Seneca." Seneca Street was one block east of St. Clair Street and ran between Ontario Street and Illinois Street. It was erased as the land was developed.

The increasing popularity of baseball led to the Atlantics securing a five-year lease to Ogden Park in 1868 and making changes to its design. The park expanded to permit the construction of an amphitheater and additional buildings with the inauguration taking place on June 23 in a game between the Atlantics and the Atlantics of Brooklyn.



Chicago *Tribune*, June 24, 1868

With the demise of the Excelsiors after the 1868 season, Ogden Park became the primary location for clubs to play in 1869. The apex of the park's career came on July 31, 1869 when the Forest City Club of Rockford (featuring Albert Spalding) took on the famed Cincinnati Red Stockings. The crowd arrived early and kept coming with an estimated 8,000 people filling the park. The crowd saw the Cincinnati club triumph by way of a 53-32 score on its way to an undefeated season.

The park was still used heavily by clubs in 1870, most notably by the Chicago Athletics, the Amateurs (who contained remnants of the Excelsiors), and the fledgling professional Chicago White Stockings (who used it for exhibition games). In July, a section of the stands containing 200 people collapsed. Although no serious injuries were sustained, the writing may have been on the wall for the park. The remaining games in the 1870 season were played, but sports activity there stopped after a game in late-April of 1871. Any remnants of the park would have been gone by the end of the year as the park was inside the burn zone of the Great Chicago Fire in the fall of 1871.

## Excelsior Grounds

For most of the 1860's, the Excelsiors were the premier club in Chicago and among the best in the Midwest. The team attempted to "step up in class" in 1868 when it opted to not join in on the Atlantics' refurbishing of Ogden Park, but rather build their own structure. For a location, they opted to use part of the Uhlich estate. After Carl Gottfried Uhlich emigrated to the United States, he purchased numerous tracts of land in Chicago including one bounded by 22<sup>nd</sup> Street (now Cermak Road) on the north, State Street on the east, 26<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, and Wentworth Avenue on the west (modern address, approx. 2200 S. State). He set up a popular hotel on the southeast corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and State Street with stables to the west and leased out the other land on his property. Some of the land would eventually be used to construct the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Grounds, Chicago's first National League park, but the spot that the Excelsiors snared was the land immediately south of the hotel and extending to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

The Excelsiors spared no expense on the design which the *Chicago Tribune* identified as being "fitted up in first-class order, provided with raised seats, buildings, and every facility and convenience for the playing of matches and accommodation of spectators." *The Chicago Times* provided further detail: "An eight-foot fence is to be erected, a capacious amphitheater will adorn the grounds, suitable cloak-rooms, refreshment rooms, and stables will be constructed." Coverage of the Excelsiors inaugural game against the Eurekas on May 30 identified the dimensions as "475 feet in width and 600 feet in length".

The *Chicago Tribune* summed up the park as follows: "The Excelsior Club has laid a beautiful ground for ball play on State street. The field is sufficiently ample, and is as level and smooth as could be desired. The erection of convenient buildings, and an amphitheater for several thousand people, with other improvements combine to make it one of the very finest in the country."

Unfortunately, the park's stay was short-lived. With a few exceptions, the games were sparsely attended. Even the well-attended games were disappointments – a hearty crowd of 2,000 came out on July 21, only to see the Excelsiors get upset by a 43-22 score to the Cincinnati Buckeyes. By the end of the year, the Excelsiors had fallen into financial arrears and the players had left. But the Excelsior grounds left a legacy as being the first facility in Chicago constructed specifically for baseball.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Modern-day street names given.

2 The Protoball website lists 27 different early baseball grounds in Chicago. For more, visit [https://protoball.org/Fields\\_in\\_Chicago,\\_IL](https://protoball.org/Fields_in_Chicago,_IL)

Article author Richard Smiley will be leading a walking tour of Chicago's old ballparks at the SABR Convention in Chicago this summer.

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## Photo Essay--The Earliest Known Photographs of Baseball

Many consider this the first known photo of a baseball team. The Gothams of Manhattan, 1855



The members, standing, left to right, are T. G. Van Cott, pitcher; William Boren, catcher; J. McCloskey, third base; G. Tread, shortstop; Phil Sheridan, left field; E. H. Cullen, second base; Van, first base; Winslow, center field; Charles Goodenough, right field. The men seated, left to right, are William H. Van Cott, president; G. Van Cott, captain; H. M. Platt, game keeper.

Source: Our Game Blog

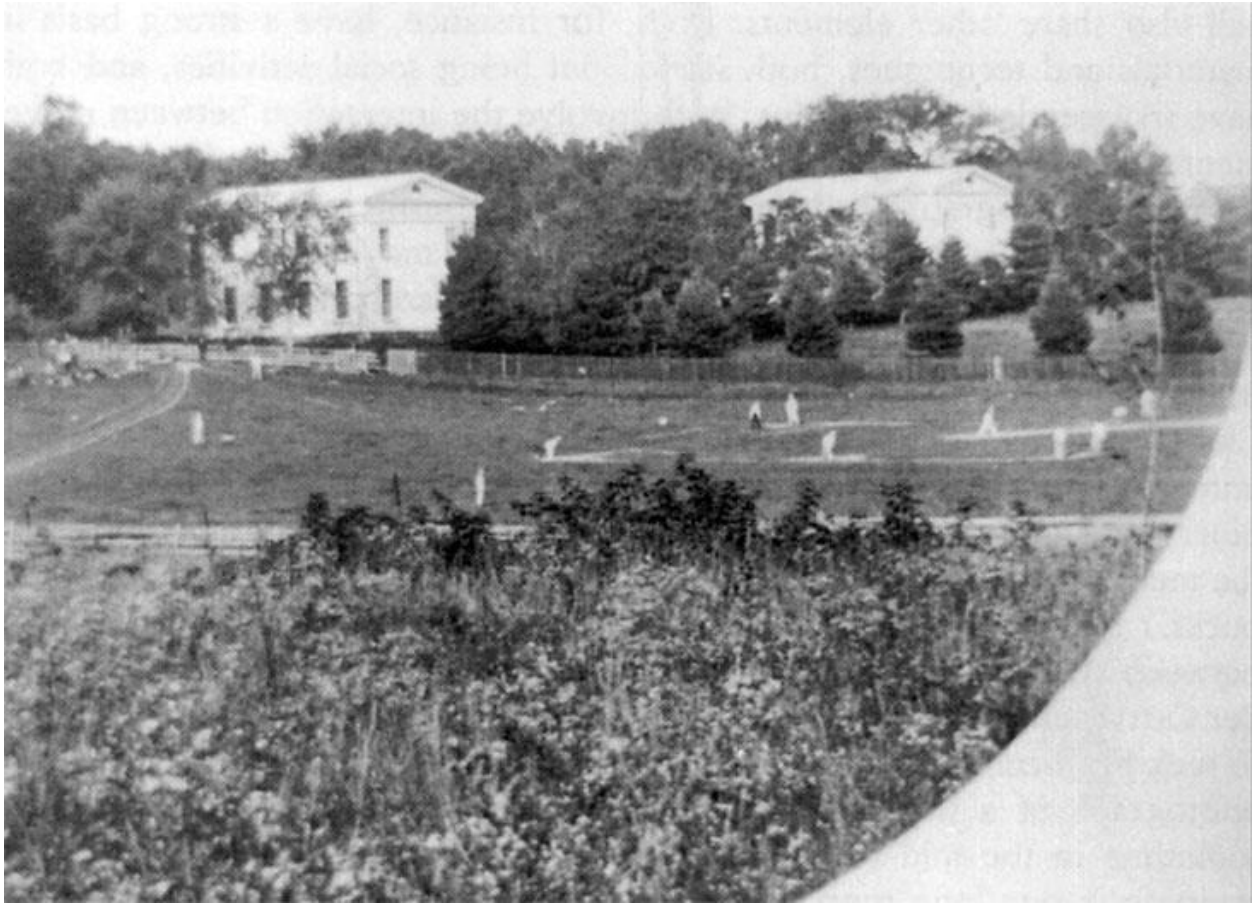
Second Known Photo of baseball teams? Knickerbockers and Excelsiors, 1859.



From NYPL and Our Game blog

Is this the first photo of a baseball game in progress? Princeton College, c. 1860





From 1861 Princeton Yearbook

First Photo of a Baseball game by soldiers? Fort Pulaski, near Savannah, GA, 1862



Fort Pulaski, near Savannah, Georgia, 1862. 48<sup>th</sup> NY playing baseball in the background. From NPS.

First Photo of Soldiers Playing Baseball? Camp Cleveland, c. 1861



Soldiers playing in the background, from <https://www.clevelandbluesbaseball.com/leaguepark.htm>. Dated c. 1861, Cleveland, Ohio

First photo of a baseball game in action? Washington, CT, 1869





From Wikimedia

First photo of a cricket match in progress, 1857 England.

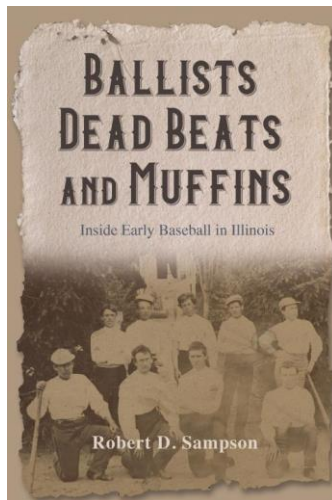


From Wikimedia. There is a photo dated 1854 of cricket being played at Simla, India by British residents.

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## Book Review—Inside Early Baseball in Illinois

The University of Illinois Press has just published a great new book: *Ballists, Dead Beats and Muffins. Inside Early Baseball in Illinois*. The author, Professor Robert D. Sampson of Milliken College in Decatur, is a longtime vintage baseball enthusiast who is also the editor of the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*.



The book focuses on baseball from 1865 to 1869, when (as the author notes) an epidemic of “base ball on the brain” raged in Illinois. Using a vast array of archival sources, mainly old newspapers (**and protoball!**), Sampson paints a picture of the social aspects of the game, as much as he does the game of the field.

The book is cleverly divided into nine “innings” (chapters) where different aspects of the game—its players, the fun, the inter-city rivalries—are explored, with wit and erudition. The focus is on downstate Illinois teams, particularly those in Springfield and Bloomington, rather than Chicago teams.

One conclusion the author comes to is that by 1869, organized adult baseball was declining in Illinois, with “junior” (teenage) clubs taking their place. He uses the late

1869 game between the professional Cincinnati Red Stockings and the Quincy Occidentals as marking the end of the glory days of amateur baseball, as the professionals, who shellacked the amateurs 51-7, demonstrated to all baseball's professional future and the demise of the "gentleman's game."

In the appendix the author lists over 500 clubs he'd found in Illinois during this period, while doing his research. While the listing for Chicago clubs isn't intended to be complete, devotees of Protoball's "pre-Pro" listing of clubs will find much here that is new.

Author Peter Morris (*Base Ball Founders*, etc.) calls this book "both timely and valuable, confirming some long-accepted assumptions and forcing reexamination of others. Highly recommended!" This reviewer seconds that praise.

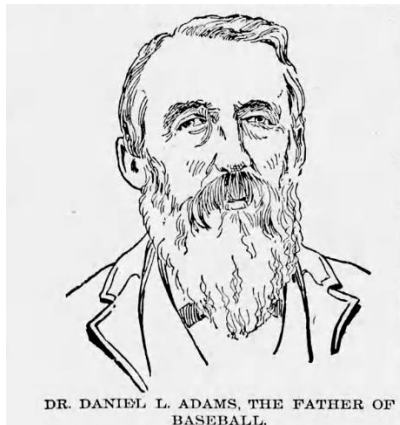
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## 1895 Interview with the "Father of Baseball"—'Doc' Adams

On June 23, 1895, the *Chicago Chronicle* interviewed the man they labeled the "Father of Baseball," Dr. Daniel L. "Doc" Adams. This 1895 interview appears to be the catalyst for the longer interview with *The Sporting News* that Adams gave in 1896.

The interview is important for the light Adams sheds on the birth of baseball, and his role in it. It may be the first instance of Adams being called baseball's father.

There is currently a movement to elect Adams to the Baseball Hall of Fame. See <https://docadamsbaseball.org/updatespress-releases-2/the-chicago-chronicle-june-23-1895/>





## SIDE LIGHTS ON THE BALL FIELD.

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The Father of the National Game Still  
Living in New Haven.

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Stringent Rules the Demand of the Hour  
Upon the Magnates.

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### FATHER OF BASEBALL.

Thousands of Chicagoans who admire baseball will be interested in the fact that there is still living in New Haven the father of the game, Dr. Daniel L. Adams, an octogenarian. He is exceedingly well preserved, and his active step and unimpaired eyesight and hearing go far to prove the value of an active interest in athletics in early life. The doctor was one of the first men to belong to an organized baseball club, and quickly took the lead in all matters connected with the growth and character of the national game. He went to New York as a physician in 1838. He says: "In September, 1845, some young men formed the Knickerbocker baseball club. They went into it just for exercise and enjoyment, and I think they used to get a good deal more solid fun out of it than the players in the big games do nowadays. About a month after the organization of this club, several of us medical fellows joined it. The following year I was made president, and served as long as I was willing to retain the office. Twice a week we went over to the 'Elysian Fields' for practice. Once there we were free from all restraint, and throwing off our coats we played until it was too dark to see any longer. I was a left-handed batter, and sometimes used to get the ball into



to see any longer. I was a left-handed batter, and sometimes used to get the ball into the river. People began to take an interest in the game presently, and sometimes we had as many as 100 spectators watching the practice. The rules at that time were very crude. The pitching was all underhand, and the catcher usually stood back and caught the ball on the bound.

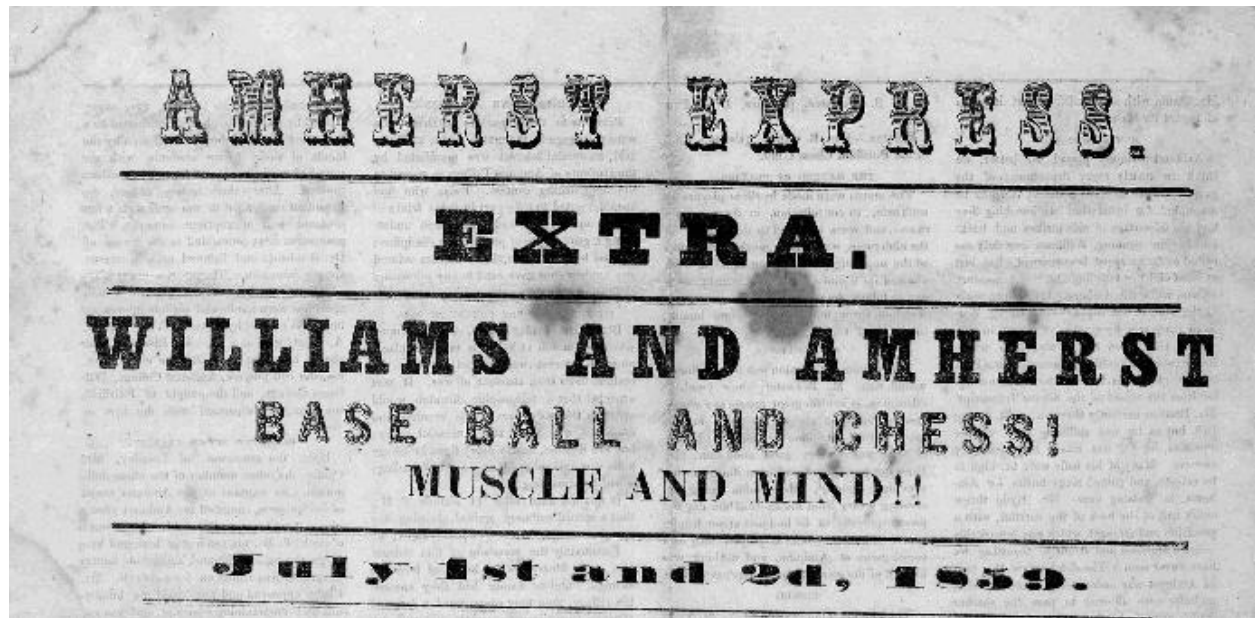
"Our players were not very enthusiastic at first, and did not always turn out well on practice days. There was then no rivalry, as no other club was formed until 1850, and during these five years baseball had a desperate struggle for existence." As captain, I had to employ all my rhetoric to induce attendance, and often thought it useless to continue the effort, but my love for the game, and the happy hours spent at the 'Elysian Fields' led me to persevere. During the summer months many of our members were out of town, thus leaving a very short playing season.

"We had a great deal of trouble in getting balls made, and for six or seven years I made all the balls myself, not only for our club, but also for other clubs when they were organized. I went all over New York to find someone who would undertake this work, but no one could be induced to try it for love or money. Finally I found a Scotch saddler who was able to show me a good way to cover the balls with horsehide, such as was used for whip lashes. I used to make the stuffing out of three or four ounces of rubber cuttings, wound with yarn and then covered with the leather. These balls were of course a great deal softer than the balls now in use. It was not until some time after 1850 that a shoemaker was found who was willing to make them for us. This was the beginning of base ball manufacturing."

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## Potpourri

### First NCAA baseball game, 1859



There's no questioning that the first ever college baseball game took place in 1859 — 44 years before the first World Series. (and long before the NCAA was formed!)

On July 1 of that year, Amherst College and neighboring Williams College met in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, for the first-ever game of baseball between two colleges.

But the game was played under Massachusetts rules, which look wildly different than the baseball we know today. "Plugging" a runner was allowed, and the game would be played to a set score rather than a set time or number of innings.

Williams and Amherst agreed that the game would be played to 65 "tallies" (or runs), and that each team would consist of 13 players. And since each inning lasted for only one out, the game went for 25 innings before the 65-run mark was met.

Williams took an early 9-2 lead in the game, but Amherst was the first to 65. Yet they didn't stop there. Due to a lack of a mercy rule, they piled on eight more runs before the final out, going on to win 73-32.

And for good measure, the two teams played a chess match afterwards, which Amherst also won. For this one day in 1859, "muscle and mind" coincided!

## AMHERST WINS!

Amherst 73. Williams 32.

### SCORE.

AMHERST CLUB.			WILLIAMS CLUB.		
Players.	Tallies.	Outs.	Players.	Tallies.	Outs.
Clafin, catcher,	7	0	Parker	0	4
Pierce	5	2	Fitch	0	5
Storrs	7	1	Blagden	1	5
Tower	7	1	Simmons	4	1
Cushman	4	3	Brown	3	3
Evans	5	4	Hastings	4	1
Fenn	5	0	Quick	3	1
Hyde, thrower,	4	3	Pratt	2	2
Leach	6	0	Knox	4	0
Roome	5	4	Bush	4	1
Gridley	5	4	Beecher, thro.	3	2
Pratt	7	2	Nichols	2	0
Tomson	6	2	Anderson, catch.	2	1
Total	73			32	

Amherst Express, July, 1859

For more on this game, see the SABR article and the NCAA website.

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**No Bad Language in Baseball!**

From the *Ogle County Press* of Polo, Illinois, July 2, 1870, a reminder that bad language didn't start in modern times. Unfortunately for historians, the newspaper was too fastidious to print the exact words used.

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### **Base Bawlers!**

The citizens living near the base ball grounds have complained against the club for the profane and vulgar talk used by some of its members, and outsiders, and we are requested to say that if it is not immediately stopped, the boys will have to look for other grounds farther from the city. Any young man who has not manners nor common decency enough while playing ball to use good language, he ought not to be allowed on the grounds, and we hope the club will see to it, and have no more profane or vulgar words used; for they are held responsible for every word said.

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## Early (Earliest?) Mention of the Balk Rule?

From the Rondout (NY) *Freeman*, June 5, 1847, comes what may be the earliest newspaper mention of the balk rule, as it relates to the game of “base.” The reporter here was comparing the antics of a local political movement to a pitcher faking out a baserunner, labelling the movement a “flash in the pan.”

“A Balk is a Base.” – Any one having a remembrance of the ball games of his youth, must recollect that in the game of *base* if the tosser made a balk to entice the individual making the round from his post, the latter had the right to walk to the next base unscathed. Pity it is that the Hudson folks engaged in the late movement in Columbia County did not remember that “a balk is a base” in the games of children of larger growth.

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## Is Ball-Playing Irish?

It seems that in 1867, at least one Irish-American thought so. The letter appeared in *The Irish Republic*, Oct. 5, 1867 and urges Irish-Americans to form baseball clubs, in order to get physically fit for the (hoped for) battle to liberate Ireland from the English.

A Fenian Base Ball Club in every City.

Minneapolis, Sept. 16, 1867.

Dear Republic: In a late issue of your journal I see, with great pleasure, an article on the "Requisites of a Soldier," over the signature of "J. E. Cl.," which, in most respects, strikes me as being very pertinent and timely. I am pleased to see this subject ventilated, as it must appear, to every Fenian who thinks on the prospects of the future, that it is a matter of necessity that our young men should prepare themselves in such a manner for the coming struggle, that, like the Swedes under Charles XII, they shall be able to fight twenty thousand to eighty. This can only be done by sound preparatory exercises, mental, moral and physical. Our men must be intelligent soldiers. They must be virtuous soldiers. They must be active soldiers. All history proves that such men must conquer. In fact, this is, in a measure, the reason why the Normans conquered England. I have for some time been thinking why it is that our young men, who



were unquestionably the best ball players in Europe, do not organize themselves into clubs for ball practice, base ball, foot ball, and such other manly exercises, also band ball, burly, etc. Let there be "a Fenian base ball club" in every town. Come, who will set the "ball" rolling? Hoping to see something done in this line and soon,

I am, etc., P. F.

P. S. I think it can be proven that the exercise of ball playing is an Irish institution; and one well calculated to make vigorous young men.

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## Latest Protoball Additions

**Total numbers**—As of April 8, 2023, the Protoball **Pre-Pro (pre-1871) Database** contained 11,762 clubs and 3,950 ballgames, with a further 5,000 games in the searchable Tholkes RIM file but only partially entered into the Pre-Pro database. Since the last newsletter, 39 clubs and 9 ballgames have been added.

Of the 291 U.S. cities in 1870 with a population of 5,000 or more, pre-1871 baseball has been found in 289 of them. The fishing cities of Gloucester, MA and Calais, ME are the only exceptions.

For the so-called "**predecessor**" **games** such as townball and cricket, there are 625 U.S. entries. Since the last newsletter, 9 such games/clubs have been added. The "**Glossary of Games**" includes 327 predecessor and derivative bat-ball games. The "**Chronology**" has 2,044 entries.

295 early U.S. **baseball fields** are described, including baseball fields in all 50 states. Since the last newsletter, 6 fields have been added.

**"First" Cricket added:** Records of the first game of cricket in 85 different countries have been added to the Glossary of Games entry on Cricket.

**ProtoPix:** We're slowly adding photos and images of early baseball to the new "ProtoPix" section of Protoball. It is hoped to eventually make this a one-stop source of images of early baseball.



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## Finds of the Month

Two finds, really. The first being a new **earliest baseball game in Raleigh, NC**. The Raleigh *Daily Standard*, July 3, 1865, reported that the 47th and 48th New York, of the Union occupying force, will play baseball, nine a side, at the 47th's camp on July 4th. Both units had a baseball history. The 48th was photographed playing baseball in Fort Pulaski in 1862, the only verified photo of CW soldiers playing baseball. The 47th included among their members Ed Pinkham, who later played professionally.

And a new **first baseball in Germany**. The memoirs of George H. Putnam recall that while studying in Gottingen, Germany, in early 1861, he and his fellow American students played baseball and cricket with and against the English and German students there. Putnam was the scion of the Putnam Publishing Company family, and had played baseball in the U.S.

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## Research Requests

**Elysian Fields Project:** Protoball has opened a page on the state of knowledge about Elysian Fields and its influence on the evolution of baseball. Irwin Chusid and Jon Popovich have expressed strong interest in writing further about Elysian Fields, and will participate in this limited-term discussion. For a riveting presentation on Elysian Fields from a baseball researcher's point of view, see Irwin and Jonathan's recent Youtube presentation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwJGWeWDHPA>.

**Protoball** has found and listed baseball in **all but five of the world's 200 countries**. But we're still looking for baseball in the tiny countries of Andorra and Liechtenstein (Europe), Dominica (Caribbean), Timor-Leste (Asia), and Equatorial Guinea (Africa). Since the last newsletter, baseball has been found in Sao Tome and the Maldives.



## BULLETIN BOARD

**David Block** emails: I don't think I told you my big news. By some miracle I have acquired an original *Little Pretty Pocket-book*. It's lacking its title page so I don't know its year of publication, but it is definitely one of the editions published in London by John Newbery (and not the comparatively common 1787 edition published in Worcester, Mass). It is rare to the point of ridiculousness; I know of only seven other copies worldwide. Mine does not match any of other surviving copies, so it is one of the 10 or 11 editions published between 1744 and 1783 of which no survivors were previously known. I bought it relatively cheaply in December from an out of the way auction house in Sussex.

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**Bruce Allardice** has an article on William E. White, the first black Major Leaguer, in the Chicago-Rothe SABR chapter newsletter for May. White is buried in River Grove, Illinois, a suburb just west of Chicago.

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The 14th annual **SABR Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference** was held on April 28-29, 2023, at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

The 2023 conference was highlighted by a keynote address from author (and origins guru) **Jonathan Popovich**, along with a panel discussion on baseball's 19th-century color line with Richard Hershberger, Peter Mancuso, Brian Sheehy, and moderator Bill Ryczek; a 19th-century artifact session with Robert Mayer, Greg Passamonte, and Popovich; a Member Spotlight interview of Robert Mayer by Bob Bailey; plus research presentations and a Sunday morning vintage baseball game at Doubleday Field.

The presenters include Origins friends like Bill Ryczek, Irwin Chusid, Bob Tholkes [On “What’s wrong with Baseball (in 1867)?”], Richard Hershberger, Peter Mancuso, Brian Sheehy. Tom Gilbert and Justin McKinney.

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**The next SABR national convention will be held July 5-9, 2023, at the Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL.**

The SABR national convention is an annual gathering of writers, researchers, fans, players, executives, scouts and many others throughout the baseball community. Attendance is open to all, regardless of SABR membership. The convention includes five days of activities and excursions, including dozens of research presentations, panel discussions and group trips to major league and minor league ballgames.

One of the presenters will be **Bruce Allardice**, on “The Ultimate Tear-Down and Rebuild: The White Sox after the Black Sox Scandal.”

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Men Playing bat-ball game, 1300s, from Smithfield Decretals