

Baseball Origins Newsletter

Volume Two, Number 2

June 2022

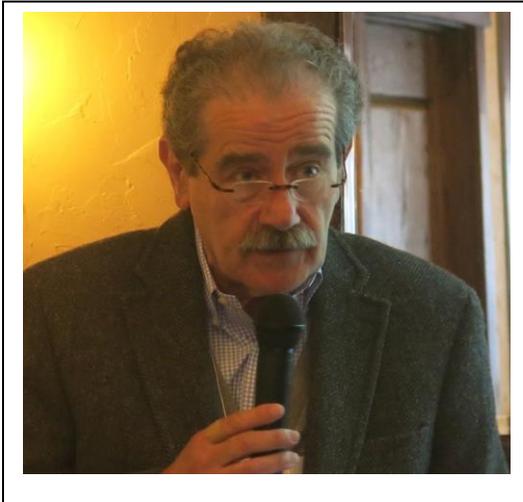
In this issue:

Interview with John Thorn...Page 2
Featured Game: Old Cat ...Page 4
“Opening Day” in Buffalo, 1858...Page 10
A Tale of Two Paintings Page 14
Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ballplayer ... Page 18
“Escape from New York” ... Page 19
At the Old Ball Game ... Page 22
Potpourri ...Page 24
Latest Protoball Additions ...Page 27
Find of the Month ...Page 27
Research Requests ...Page 27
Bulletin Board ...Page 28

The baseball origins newsletter is put out by members of SABR’s Origins Committee, and the website for baseball’s origins, 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 or Larry McCray at lmccray@mit.edu.

Protoball Interview with John Thorn



Larry McCray Note: John Thorn needs no introduction to readers of this newsletter, or to the baseball history community at large. John is the author and editor of numerous books, including *Total Baseball: The Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball*, and *Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game*. In 2011 he was appointed Official Baseball Historian for Major League Baseball. His MLB blog, "Our Game," delights us all.

John Thorn

Question 1: *You and the late SABR VP Fred Ivor-Campbell were two of the key supporters of the idea of an open database on the origins of base ball about 15 years ago. What got you interested in the subject, initially? Was your work on the 1994 Ken Burns Baseball documentary something of a turning point?*

After dabbling in sabermetrics and the evolution of baseball statistics, even before creating *Total Baseball* with Pete Palmer or working with Ken Burns on *Baseball*, it struck me that the real dark side of the moon was 19th century baseball before league play. Beginning with research at, most notably, the Hall of Fame and the New York Public Library's Spalding Collection, I began work with Mark Rucker on documenting the pictorial history of the game from its dawn to 1901, in the *National Pastime* special issue of 1984. (He and I had dreamed up the 19th Century Baseball Research Committee in 1982.)

How did baseball really rise and flower, I began to wonder some forty years ago, knowing that legends tied to Doubleday and Cartwright were public-relations exemplars rather than history. Much of the digging that followed landed in my 2011 book, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*; the answers lay partly in the game itself but increasingly in the larger culture, with its to us curious attitudes towards play. But as any researcher knows, one path leads inevitably to the glimpse of another, often more interesting one. When Larry McCray and I first discussed a thing we called, for lack of a better word, Protoball, in 2004 or so, the goal was to expand upon the "Chronology of Early Bat and

Ball Games" that Tom Heitz and I had constructed about a decade earlier. So I was already pretty deep into my early-baseball study when Ken Burns invited me to take a principal part in his film, which had originally been conceived as three evenings concentrated on the rivalry between the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox. He could not have known, at the outset of our widening vision, that the rivalry for baseball supremacy between those cities had begun in the 1840s.

Question 2: *Has your position as MLB's Official Historian affected the way you think about the early evolution of the American pastime? How?*

No, not really. Everything that I continue to learn about this great game will ricochet off the walls of Protoball, and I do write or speak publicly often about the early game and its artifacts, some of which have emerged only in the years since Commissioner Selig invited me to succeed Jerome Holtzman as the game's official historian. Notable among these have been what I termed "The Magna Carta of Baseball" (the manuscript proposal for the rules changes of 1857 that had long been assumed to originate with the Knickerbocker Club of 1845) and handwritten minutes of a meeting at New York's Grand Central Hotel on February 2, 1876, when the National League (and thus MLB) was formed.

Although Protoball diggers and writers have planted our flag on the dark side of the moon (David Block, Craig Waff, Monica Nucciarone, Bruce Allardice, Bob Tholkes, Richard Hershberger, and more--who did I leave out? maybe you?), surely *terra incognita* remains. While it is unlikely that I will write another book-length study of the early game, I remain curious about it, correspond regularly with colleagues, and have scribbled about baseball's largely unexplored connections: to boating, gymnastics, horseracing, boxing, ballroom dance and, of increasing significance, fandom and betting.

Question 3: *If some Musk-like person offered you 4 hours of time travel to a pre-1872 site of your choice, where would you go and what would you do there?*

Skirting cholera, a prime mover in the history of baseball, I would go the Elysian Fields of Hoboken in September 1845, when the Knickerbockers arrived ... not at an unspoiled sylvan setting but at fields brimming with baseball players of the New York (aka Gotham) and Magnolia clubs. I know that the Knicks and the New Yorks played intramurally that Fall, but there is no record of them having played the Magnolias, the club of sporting-life characters, from ward heelers to billiard-room operators and bigamists.

I would arrange a match.

“Old Cat”—The (Largely) Forgotten Precursor of Baseball

By Bruce Allardice

The bat-and-ball games of the early 1800s (prior to 1850) were known under various names, such as “town ball” and “rounders.” Oceans of ink have been devoted to the connection between these games and what we know today as “Baseball,” a game which perhaps more properly (for the era) might be termed “New York Rules Baseball.”

In the late 1800s and early 1900s baseball experts (self-styled, or actual) and baseball pioneers extensively discussed the origins of baseball. During this era, the bat-ball game of “old cat” was one of the prime candidates of the game that baseball was derived from (assuming, *sub silentio*, that baseball was “derived” from another game).

This article will not attempt to prove, or disprove, that baseball derived from “old cat.” Instead, it will attempt to explain what “old cat” games were, and trace their growth in the U.S.

What’s in a Name?

First off, the family of “cat” games includes many variations and many names, depending on the region and the number of players. In this article the term “old cat” will be used as a generic term for games denominated “old cat,” “cat,” “one old cat,” “two old cat,” “three old cat,” “four old cat,” “three cornered cat” along with numerous “o’cat” iterations.^{1 2}



ONE OLD CAT



TWO OLD CAT



THREE OLD CAT



FOUR OLD CAT

From Spalding's *America's National Game* (1911)

What was “Old Cat”?

MLB historian John Thorn, for one, accepts the explanation of the game given by Baseball pioneer Albert Spalding:

*“One old cat was played by three boys—a thrower, catcher and batsman. The latter, after striking the ball, ran to a goal about thirty feet distant, and by returning to the batsman’s position without being put out, counted one run or tally. Two old cat was played by four or more boys with two batsmen placed about forty feet apart. Three old cat was played by six or more boys with three batsmen, the ground being laid out in the shape of a triangle. Four old cat was played by eight or more boys with grounds laid out in the shape of a square.... Individual scores or tallies were credited to the batsman making the hit and running from one corner to the next. Some ingenious American lad naturally suggested that one thrower be placed in the center of the square, which brought nine players into the game, and which also made it possible to change the game into teams or sides, one side fielding and the other side batting. This was for many years known as the old game of town ball, from which the present game of base ball **may** [emphasis added] have had its origin.”³*

Albert G. Spalding (1850-1915), Hall of Fame player and manager, founder of Spalding Sporting Goods and the *Spalding Baseball Guide*, was perhaps the most prominent proponent of the “old cat” baseball connection. It is easy to see the possible connection. “Old cat” has many of the elements that define baseball, including pitching, batting, baserunning, fielding, scoring and, in its “four old cat” variant, competing teams.

If Spalding is to be believed, “four old cat” is just another, earlier name for “town ball,” and that “town ball/four old cat” MAY be the origin of baseball.

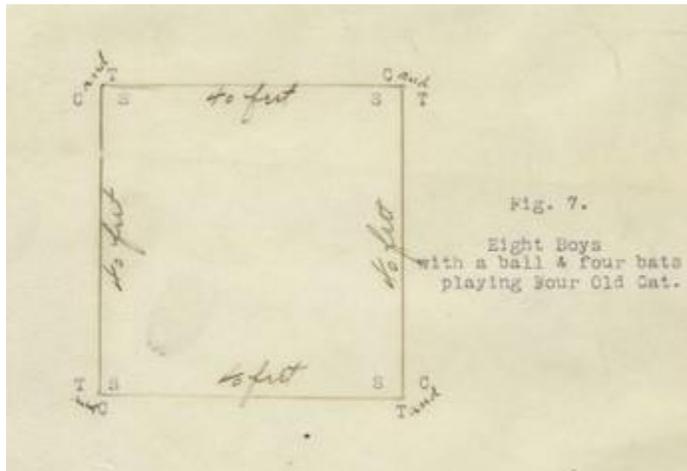
More evidence of how “old cat” was played comes from a letter written by Henry Sargent of Grafton, MA (1856-1935) to the Mills Commission in 1905.

Four Old Cat and Three Old Cat were as well known to Massachusetts boys as round ball. I knew both games in 1862 and Mr. Stoddard [of the Upton Excelsiors] tells me that his father knew them and played them between 1800 and 1820. They bore about the same relation to round ball that “scrub” does to baseball now. The boys got together when there was leisure for any game and if there were enough to make up a game — even if they were 2 or 3 short of the regulation 14 on a side — they played round-ball. If there were not more than a dozen all told, they contented themselves with four old cat, or with three old cat if there were still less players.... The main thing to be remembered is that 4 + 3 old cat seem to be co-eval with

Massachusetts round-ball + were considered a modification of round ball for a less number of players than the regular game required....

Sargent suggests that the “old cat” games themselves derive from “town” or “round ball” games, aka Massachusetts baseball.⁴

Sargent helpfully provided a chart of “four old cat”:



Connection to Baseball?

Albert Spalding was not alone in his focus on “old cat.” In his now famous 1887 interview, William Wheaton, a founding member of the 1845 Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, recalled that in the 1830s, he and his friends rejected cricket as “too slow and lazy a game.” Seeking exercise, they played “three-cornered cat, a boys game,”⁵ but because of the danger of “soaking” runners to put them out (striking them with a thrown ball) “we decided to remodel three-cornered cat and make a new game. We first organized what we called the Gotham Baseball Club [in 1837].”⁶ Wheaton co-wrote the 1845 Knickerbocker Club rules—often seen as the origin of modern baseball—thus establishing a direct connection between those rules and “old cat.”

As early as 1871 baseball pioneer Henry Chadwick cited a connection between “two old cat” and baseball.⁷ In his 1888 book *Base-Ball*, John Montgomery Ward claimed that baseball “was a direct descendant of ‘one old cat’” and goes on further to describe early “cat” games.⁸ In 1903 Ted Sullivan (denominated the Johnny Appleseed of baseball in his SABR biography) felt that “the origin of baseball may be the evolution of townball, barnball, two-old-cat or yet it may be the suggestion of the three named.”⁹

If baseball pioneers of the (deservedly) high status as Spalding, Wheaton, Ward, Chadwick and Sullivan¹⁰ believed (to varying degrees) that baseball derived from—or at least was related to--“cat” games, that claim must be taken seriously by modern

historians. While the opinion of such experts is not dispositive, at a minimum such opinions carry great weight and demand more of an exploration of “old cat.”

Modern historians and “Old Cat”

Historians of baseball’s origins have long recognized “old cat” and have, with their greater access to sources, expanded on what Spalding et al. wrote.¹¹ John Thorn’s magisterial study of the early game, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, labeled “cat ball” “a scrub [i.e., non-team] game.” Nevertheless, Thorn devoted considerable space to “old cat,” though he did not go so far as to agree that baseball derived from it. Stating the modern synthesis, Thorn quoted Henry Chadwick as concluding that “baseball never had no ‘fadder’; it just evolved.” Historian David Block found the American “old cat” games derived from older, English “cat” games such as “tip cat.” While implicitly rejecting uniquely American origins of baseball, Block acknowledged the commonality of “four old cat,” rounders and baseball.

Commonality, yes—but “old cat” more likely derived from early (pre-NY rules) baseball, than the opposite, being the game of choice when not there were not enough players to make two full teams.

Early Evidence of Cat Games in the U.S.

As David Block has emphasized, contemporary evidence for “old cat” is sparse. The game was largely a youth, not adult, game. It had no organizing national body, no written rules (at least, none that have yet been uncovered), no organized clubs. It went by many names, with varying or impromptu rules. And it was played during an era (the early 1800s) when newspapers rarely reported any sporting event other than boxing or horse racing. David Block states that the first explicit reference he found of “old cat” was in an 1837 book of children’s stories, alluding to boys playing “one old cat.”

In fact most of what we know of “old cat” comes from recollections of “old-timers” remembering the games of their youth. Fortunately, we have enough contemporary pre-1845 accounts to indicate that these reminiscences were based on an actual game. The 1791 town records of Pittsfield, Massachusetts are cited by John Thorn was perhaps the earliest specific reference to baseball. The same town ordinance that banned baseball play, in order to protect the town’s windows, also banned other games, including “cat.”

My research has uncovered dozens of entries for “old cat” games, derived from contemporary, retrospective, primary and secondary sources. Most of these are entered into the Protoball database. A sample of these (dates often approximate) would include:

1791—Pittsfield, MA town ordinance (mentioned above)

1810s, 20s--Massachusetts
 1820—Philadelphia, PA (Thorn, p. 26)
 1820s—New England; Providence, RI
 1830—Williamstown, MA
 1831—Philadelphia (Peverelly, 1866)
 1834—Springfield, IL (town ordinance banning games)
 1836—Concord, MA; New York City (Wheaton interview)
 1840s—Sparta, IL; Peekskill, NY; Nauvoo, IL
 1844—Chicago, IL
 1845—Haddam, CT (Morgan Bulkeley recollections)
 1847—Nashua, NH
 1850—Ann Arbor, MI; Amsterdam, NY
 1853—Harvard College, Cambridge, MA; Syracuse, NY
 1853—Hartford, CT (ad for “three old cat” balls)
 1850s—Wisconsin; Hawaii; Remsen, NY; Indianapolis, IN; Columbia, SC
 1855—Otsego County, NY
 1857—Wilbur, OR
 1862—Union army, by soldiers in MS
 1864—Albany, NY
 1865—Janesville, WI
 1867—Lockport, NY; Hudson, IL; Hazelton, IN

As can be seen, these games were played in many parts of the country.

W B W G O W L

BALLS—For Boys to play “Three old Cat,” “Bungings,”
 “Bass,” &c. Also, Parlor, Cotton, Woolen, and Rubber
 Balls, at the Stationery and Fancy Goods Saloon of
 mb24—d 3wcowl **ELIHU GEER, 10 State street.**

FOR CAPP AND PENNY BUSINESS TO ALL

From the *Hartford Courant*, April 9, 1853

The 1853 advertisement for “three old cat” balls is perhaps the most significant of these evidences. The clear implication is that “three old cat” was popular enough that stores sold equipment for it. And since organized baseball didn’t come to Hartford until 1860, this is contemporary proof that “three old cat” *may* have preceded it.

The game was often played post-Civil War, and indeed lasted into the 20th Century. But that story is for another article.

- 1 See Protoball's Glossary of Games (at www.protoball.org) for a more complete list of the names and variations of "cat." Older "cat" games played with wooden blocks instead of balls are not counted here.
- 2 Tom Altherr identified a game called "round cat" which was played before the Civil War, in the South and elsewhere. It bears a similar name, but we have no evidence it was played similarly. See Altherr, "Southern Ball-Games: Chermamy, Round Cat, Etc.," *Base Ball* (Spring 2011).
- 3 John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011), 4, quoting Albert Spalding, "When Baseball was Organized," *Wilkes-Barre Times*, July 18, 1905. Spalding's *Official Base Ball Guide* for 1905. The *Atlantic Monthly* for 1866 contains a too-brief description, perhaps the earliest yet found, of "one old cat." See F. B. Perkins, "Childhood: A Study," *Atlantic Monthly* (Oct. 1866), p. 392.
- 4 See <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/two-roads-diverged-9b7e6a2c5bb5>
- 5 For more on "three cornered cat," see Protoball's Glossary of Games. Thorn, op cit, says this is another name for "three old cat."
- 6 *San Francisco Examiner*, Nov. 27, 1887.
- 7 See Protoball Chronology 1871.20, citing Chadwick's *1871 Baseball Manual*. The Manual probably copied an item written for *The Nation* in 1869 by Arthur G. Sedgwick.
- 8 Ward in the *Boston Globe*, Sept. 30, 1888. John M. Ward, *Base-Ball* (Philadelphia, The Athletic Pub. Co., 1888), pp. 22-24.
- 9 See <https://baseballhistorydaily.com/tag/john-edward-sullivan>. Other early claims of baseball being derived from "old Cat" can be found in the 1870 *Western Monthly*, pp. 325-26 ("Baseball has grown out of the primeval 'two-old-cat'"); "The Philosophy of the National Game," *Cincinnati Commercial*, Aug. 30, 1869, reprinting Sedgwick's 1869 article in *The Nation* (baseball is "the lineal descendent of that favorite of boyhood, 'two old cat'"); and *Appleton's Journal* of 1871, p. 225 (stating that three-cornered-cat was the juvenile predecessor of baseball).
- 10 Spalding, Chadwick and Ward are members of Baseball's Hall of Fame.
- 11 John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York, 2011). David Block, *Baseball Before We Knew It: A Search for the Roots of the Game* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). See also Richard Hershberger, "The Creation of the Alexander Cartwright Myth," SABR Spring 2014 *Baseball Research Journal*.

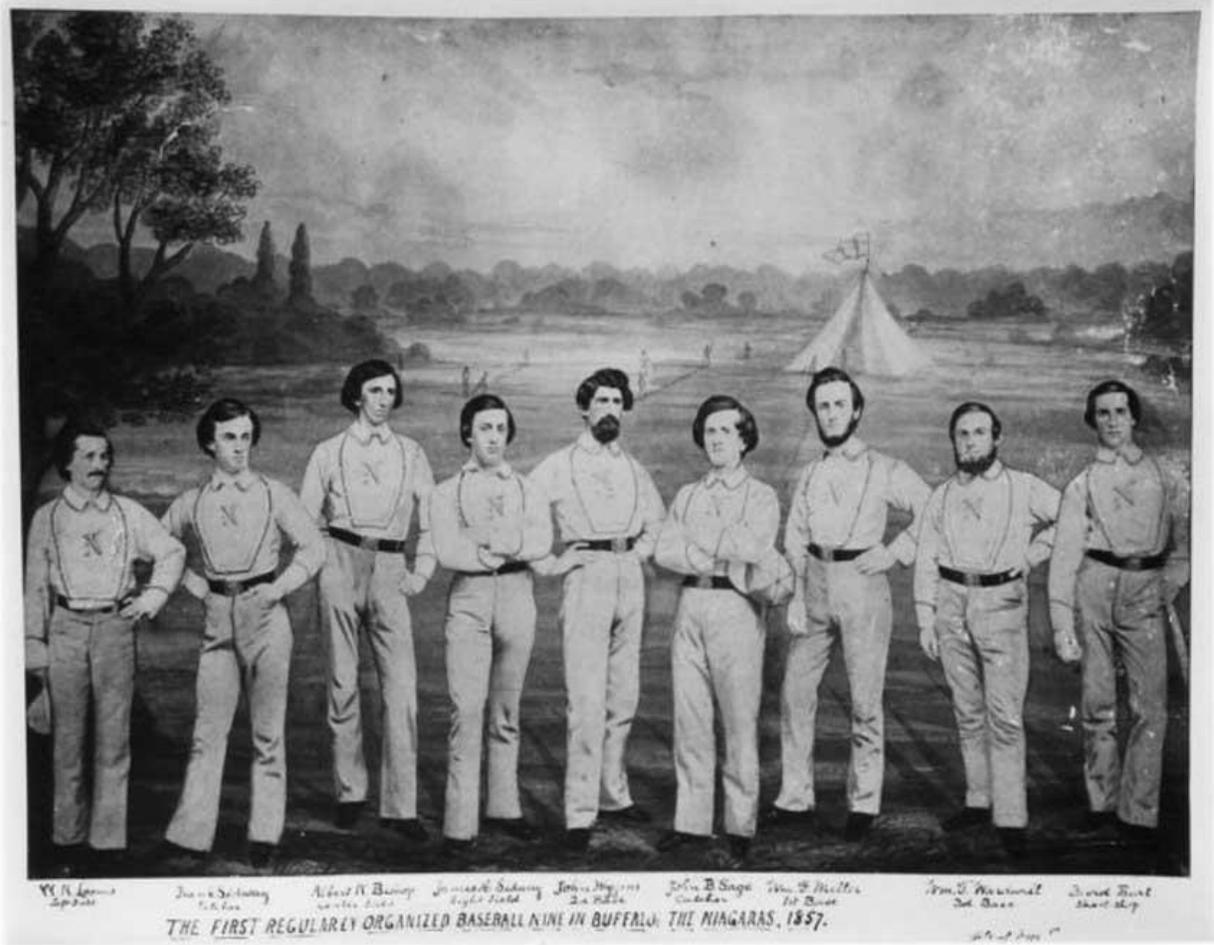
Buffalo's "First" Opening Day Using the New York Rules

by Paul Langendorfer

Editor's Note: This article is taken, with permission, from Paul Langendorfer's fine article at <https://www.buffalorising.com/2021/05/buffalos-first-opening-day-using-the-new-york-rules/> Paul is the author of the recent Arcadia Press book, *Baseball in Buffalo*



Paul Langendorfer



Lead image: This is the 1859 Team Photograph of the Buffalo Niagara's. This was created by pasting individual photos of each player on a backdrop. Photo Credit: The Buffalo History Museum, Joseph M Overfield Collection

The weather has turned in our fair city and the cold days of winter are fading into the past. As we breathe in the spring air and look forward to a COVID-free world, sometime hopefully soon, the thoughts of many local sports fans turn to the boys of summer returning to Sahlen Field. While it is unknown at this time whether those boys will be our own Bisons or the migrant Jays from the north, it seems clear we will have baseball in Buffalo this year. As we look forward to a return to normal, I am reminded of a quote by the great American poet Walt Whitman:

"I see things *great* in base ball. It's our game—the *American* game. It will take our *people* out-of-doors, fill them with oxygen, give them a *larger* physical stoicism.

Tend to *relieve* us from *being* a nervous, *dyspeptic* set. *Repair* these losses, and be a *blessing* to us.”

Taking people out-of-doors, something we all have yearned for in the last year, filling our lungs with oxygen without it being filtered by a mask, and repairing the losses we all have had to overcome in the past year have been paramount in our minds. In a sense, getting back the normal that was taken for granted, that we cannot wait to find again.

Whitman’s quote is a reinforcement of what was a general movement of the Victorian era in America. A sense of exercise and a movement to be outdoors and partaking of the world around us. This movement took off after the Civil War and in Buffalo it started in 1868 with Fredrick Law Olmsted beginning the designs of what would become the city’s extensive and renowned park system. The first of many being “The Park” (Delaware Park) which was completed 150 years ago in 1871.

As the 2021 baseball season is now almost a month old, I look forward to the excitement of Buffalo’s own Opening Day 2021. I wonder, what did Buffalo’s “first” opening day look like? Was it a mild affair or fraught with excitement and fanfare? To find that day, we need to travel back to the year 1858 in the month of August. Buffalo, New York’s first opening day using the “modern rules” of baseball was played on August 26, 1858, between the Buffalo Niagaras and the Eries.

The Niagaras were one of the first baseball clubs to grace the city and to play under the “Knickerbocker” or New York rules from which the modern rules of baseball are descended. These rules were made “official” in early 1857 when they were chosen by the National Association of Base Ball Players as the rule set they would play by going forward. In 1857 the Buffalo Niagaras were founded by a pair of gentlemen from Brooklyn named James B. Bach and Richard Oliver who brought these New York rules with them from their own club, the Brooklyn Excelsiors. What made these rules the grandfather of our own Major League Baseball (MLB) you may ask?

At first, baseball was played by two sets of rules: “New England” and New York/Knickerbocker rules. In the establishment of the New York rules, certain things we take for given in the modern MLB game were established. These include: nine players on a side, fair vs. foul balls, nine innings, three outs per half inning, and the ball was hurled (pitched) to the batter (albeit underhanded). A few interesting notes regarding these rules vs. our modern game. Until 1864 a ball could be caught on one bounce or “hop” to record an out, the ball was not pitched overhanded until 1884, balls and strikes were not regularly called, and there were no gloves in existence until the mid-1880s. It was also spelled as two words instead of one. Think of those things and of playing a game of baseball!

If the reader is interested in witnessing a slice of this history, travel up the road to Genesee Country Village Museum in Mumford, New York, and on most Saturdays and

Sundays in the summer games are played by 1868 rules—which include all of the above; however, balls are caught on the fly. Ask for “Yank” of the Victory club and I will be sure and sign an autograph for you.

Regarding our first opening day story, if one reads the Buffalo Express on August 25, 1858, you can witness the general excitement and national fervor over physical fitness along with a reference to what not only may be Buffalo’s first opening day but the first “ladies day” as well:

We hope a good representation of ladies will be present, who by their smiles, will nerve the players to their task, and urge them like the knights of old, to do their devoirs before their ‘ladyes fair.’ We believe in encouraging athletic sports of all kinds, for they promote the health and vigor of our youth in a great degree and the generations to come will feel their influence.

In this quote, one can see the influence of what Whitman was referring to, the feeling that even to this day we get when we have a good hard workout and the adrenaline is pumping through our veins. On August 26, 1858, the players took to the grounds, which were set up at Seventh and Pennsylvania and were the home grounds of the Eries. The papers the next day trumpeted the virtues of the match. The *Buffalo Express* stated:

Great Game of Base Ball- The match between the Erie and Niagara Base Ball Clubs yesterday afternoon on Seventh Street, was one of the most exciting games we ever witnessed, and was contested with remarkable skill. An immense crowd of people were in attendance, including over one hundred carriages containing ladies.

Following is the score:

ERIE CLUB.		1st Innings.								
		1st do.	2d do.	3d do.	4th do.	5th do.	6th do.	7th do.	8th do.	9th do.
A. A. Swan, 3d base.....	1									
N. S. Lockwood, catcher.....								1	1	
M. T. Humphrey, pitcher.....	1	1		1				1		1
David Tuttle, 1st base.....	1								1	
G. S. Gardner, 2d do.....								1	1	
F. P. Pashop, field.....		1		1					1	
Chas. Burns, do.....										1
M. Day, do.....										
John B. Ficks, short stop.....										
Total.....	3	1	1	1	1			3	5	1
NIAGARA CLUB.										
Wm. F. Miller, 1st base.....					1					1
John Higgins, 2d do.....				1	1	1				1
George M. Love, 3d do.....				1	1					1
Wells Miller, pitcher.....	1				2					
Geo. B. Ketchum, catcher.....				1	1					
John B. Fave, field.....		1		1	1					
Frank Sidway, do.....						1				1
Geo. B. Warwell, do.....		1		1						1
F. Demarest, short stop.....					2					
Total.....	1	2		4	2	3				5

“The Box Score from the “First Opening Day”-

Unlike a modern box score only runs or “Aces” scored by that player were represented. Credit: *Buffalo Morning Express and Illustrated Buffalo Express*, August 27, 1858 from Newspapers.com

These ladies must have encouraged the knights of Niagara in grand fashion as they were the victors that day by a score of 25-16. The local *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* shared the feelings of the spectators watching the game as “the most exciting ever witnessed” and the players’ good cheer for one another as the Niagaras gave three cheers for the Eries and they then returned the favor. Keep in mind that these were BOTH Buffalo clubs that were made up of everyday people who worked and lived together daily so the camaraderie was real.

Another interesting anecdote from this game was that only a month prior, the FIRST base ball game to charge admission was played in Queens, New York, at the Fashion Race Course. It was a contest of bragging rights, a series of three games played between varying Brooklyn and New York clubs. Spectators paid ten cents, plus an extra twenty cents to park a one-horse carriage and yet forty cents more to park a two horse carriage. Buffalonians were getting away cheap to watch a contest of the new knickerbocker rules for free.

So as you step outside and remove your mask this week and become “fill[ed] them with oxygen” think back to that lazy summer day of August, 1858, when the city was witnessing something we take for granted for the first time ever—baseball played pretty much as it is today.

A Tale of Two Paintings

By David Block

In February 2021, Larry McCray and I apparently could find no better use for our time than to wile it away in a three-way email conversation on the subject of stoolball history. The third vertex in those discussions was Andrew Lusted, a historian from the English county of Sussex who, like us, was stuck at home amid the pandemic with plenty of time on his hands. A summary of what I took away from those exchanges appeared in the December, 2021, issue of this newsletter. In that article, however, I neglected to describe a small mystery that emerged from our discussions, an oversight I shall rectify here.

Prior to our talks with Andrew Lusted, Larry forwarded to me an earlier email message from Anita Broad, the Sussex-based, vice-president of Stoolball England. She had

attached an image of a painting entitled “A Game at Stoolball, West Tarring, Sussex, 1856,” the work of a local artist named Edward Martin. The painting resides in the collection of the Worthing Museum and Gallery, also in Sussex. (West Tarring, then a small village, is now a suburb of Worthing.) The painting depicts an informal outdoor gathering of villagers, several of whom are engaged in what appears to be a game of stoolball. In the scene, a woman stands next to a small, three-legged stool. She holds a short, one-handed bat and faces a male bowler who is pitching a ball to her underhanded. A second man (or boy) crouches with bended knee behind the striker in a catching position. Several other persons, and at least one additional stool, are placed about the field.



After receiving the image from Larry, I became curious to learn what I could about the painting. A Google search for its title produced a link to the Rountree Tryon Galleries,



located in the Sussex town of Petworth. The gallery's website listed for sale a work by



artist Edward Martin entitled “A Game at Stoolball, West Tarring, Sussex, 1856.”¹ Yes, those are the exact same identifiers as the Edward Martin painting in the Worthing museum. The gallery posted an image of its copy of the painting and I compared it to the museum's version. Although similar, the two works clearly were not identical. Both were by the same artist, both were studies of the same scene; both pictured a ball game in the foreground and the same players and spectators; both displayed the same church, cottages and other buildings in their respective backgrounds, and both depicted the same male bowler, the same woman striker, and the same crouching catcher. Yet—and this is the puzzler—in the gallery's version, the bat in the woman's hand, as well as the stool in front of her, had vanished.



I've tried to understand the reason for these differences. Were they trivial adjustments attributable to the wavering whims of the artist? Or was something else at play? For me, mired in my microverse of obscure English ballgames, the omission of those two elements was significant. Let me explain.

It was not unexpected that a painting from Sussex completed in the year 1856 would feature the game of stoolball. The county of Sussex was, and is, the heartland of the game's popularity, and by the mid-19th century stoolball had already begun its transition from historic folk game to organized sport. But when I spotted the second version of Martin's painting on the gallery's website, and noticed that the striker was about to swat the ball with her bare hand, it startled me. Coupled with the absence of any stool, wicket, or elevated target in the scene, there was no visible evidence to indicate that the game was actually stoolball. When this sunk in, I quickly formed a suspicion of what I was looking at. Pictured in the painting, I believed, was the game I have spent nearly two decades researching, the lost and forgotten pastime of English baseball.

Of course, at this remove we can only guess the artist's intentions. The museum's version of the work is a watercolor, most likely a preliminary study for the oil painting offered by the gallery. That suggests that the deletion of the bat and stool in the latter was intentional. But what could have been the artist's reason for doing so? Was it simply a matter of artistic license, or artistic whim, as I posited earlier? Was it a clumsy oversight? Perhaps Edward Martin had no particular knowledge of ball games and made the changes unmindful of their significance. Ultimately, our only hard evidence is what our eyes can observe in his finished work, and what mine perceive is English baseball.

This observation goes against the inconvenient facts that Sussex was unquestionably stoolball territory and that the painting's title is "A Game of Stoolball at West Tarring." Still, for me, the missing bat is telling. Other than the game of English baseball I've not known any member of the baseball-cricket-rounders-stoolball family played in southern England during that era to be played without a bat. Furthermore, English baseball, though clearly less popular than stoolball in Sussex, was hardly unknown. For example, on Good Friday, 1857, 200 "teetotalers" in the village of Washington entertained themselves by playing games of "base-ball and cricket," according to a local newspaper.² Washington, it should be noted, lies only seven miles north of West Tarring. As to the painting's title, a bit more research is needed to determine its provenance. Was the gallery's version of the work always called "A Game of Stoolball at West Tarring," or did it acquire that name at some later date because of its similarity to the museum watercolor? On this point, the Sussex historian Andrew Lusted, who has published two books on stoolball, wrote that he too was skeptical of the title and speculated that the stoolball tag was probably added by someone who hadn't looked

too closely at the content. Ultimately, like so many historical conundrums, the mystery of the missing bat and stool may never be solved.

All in all, this is the sort of trivia that kept a nerd like me entertained during the pandemic. Let's hope the months ahead find me engaged more constructively.

1 The painting has since disappeared from the gallery's website, presumably because it was sold. However, thanks to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine you can view the image at

https://web.archive.org/web/20210813201720/https://artlogic-res.cloudinary.com/w_2400,h_2400,c_limit,f_auto,fl_lossy/ws-routreetryon/usr/images/artworks/main_image/items/11/11531bc6fdb478ca9e50d02b9ecb740/martin-stoolball-j134.jpg

2 *Sussex Agricultural Express*, April 18, 1857, p. 5

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ballplayer

The following discovery was recently mailed to MLB's Historian, John Thorn, by Bruce Weber, and passed along to the editor:



Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The Scarlet Letter*

"Hi John, thought you might be interested in this, if you weren't already aware of it. Hawthorne injured his foot when he was nine years old in 1813. Here's a quote from Brenda Wineapple's 2003 biography (Ebe was Hawthorne's sister).

"Less than six weeks after Uncle Richard left Salem for good, Nathaniel injured his foot at school while playing, Ebe said, with a bat and ball."

When Did Baseball Leave New York and Go National?

By Bruce Allardice

The early history of baseball has long been skewed by a New York City-centric focus. The focus is in many ways understandable. The first known, written rules of baseball were those of New York City's Knickerbocker Club. The early national baseball conventions were held in New York City. The early sport-reporting newspapers, notably *The Spirit of the Times* and the *New York Clipper*, were both New York publications, whose reporting centered in New York area games and clubs. The very nature of the phrase used so often in histories, "the New York game," implies, perhaps inadvertently, that the early game centered in New York City.

Yet there is more to early baseball than what happened within 20 miles of Manhattan. The game spread so rapidly that, by 1871, one writer observed "Base Ball ... has passed from city to town, from town to village, till it has overspread the nation. A thriving town in the West is now said to have one church, one school-house, and eight baseball clubs. It is as much our national game as cricket is that of the English."¹

With the statistics provided by the Protoball database, we can see, statistically at least, how much of the focus on early New York City baseball is justified.

A preliminary question must be answered—what New York City? In the 1850s, New York City was essentially the modern borough of Manhattan (i.e., Manhattan Island), one of the five boroughs that make up modern New York City. Brooklyn was an independent city, and would remain so until 1898. As a previous article in this newsletter has shown, baseball's focus shifted from New York City to Brooklyn as early as 1857.² However, when baseball historians at the time, and today, think of New York City, they don't confine themselves to Manhattan, but rather look at the New York City metropolitan area. Which raises a slightly different set of questions: What is Metropolitan New York City? And since metropolitan areas change with time, should we go by today's understanding, or that of earlier times?

Today's "metropolitan New York City" is often defined not just as the five boroughs, but instead to include large swathes of Long Island to the east, Westchester County to the north, and northeast New Jersey. But New Yorkers in the 1850s did not have this expanded view of their metropolitan area.



Simplified map, showing the five boroughs, Hudson County, and surroundings

A glance at an 1860 map shows that many of the New York City (NYC) suburbs we take for granted today, if they existed at all in 1860, simply were not (in the modern sense) adjuncts of the central city, and that if they existed, they existed as independent towns. When speaking of NYC's suburbs, one contemporary newspaper, the *New York Daily Herald*, listed only Brooklyn, Jersey City, Hudson, and Staten Island. Another listed Brooklyn, Staten Island, Jersey City and Hoboken as places where people commuted to NYC to work. In 1866 the *New York Clipper* wrote of "Williamsburg, Hoboken, Jersey City and suburbs." The same newspaper in 1867 wrote of "Williamsburg, Hoboken, Jersey City, Tremont and the suburbs generally." Outside of Hudson County (Hoboken, Jersey City and Hudson), northeast New Jersey was NOT considered part of metropolitan NYC. Nor was Westchester County, New York, or much of Long Island (Nassau County). Newark, New Jersey was labeled NYC's "sprightly neighbor," not as a suburb.³

A reasonable interpretation of the map and these contemporary sources suggest that even for New Yorkers, 1850s metropolitan NYC would include (at a maximum) the five modern boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island, The Bronx and Queens) along with Hudson County, New Jersey, just west across the Hudson River.

With the NYC Metro area of the 1850s defined, we can then trace the growth of baseball in that metropolitan area. In this article we'll use number of baseball clubs as a proxy for baseball interest. This proxy is admittedly inexact. The number of clubs the Origins Committee has found proof of, and input, is not and never will be a 100% accurate count of the nation's clubs, simply because the source material (mainly, old newspapers) is incomplete. If anything, the source material (and thus the count) exaggerates the number of Metro NYC clubs, because many of the extant newspapers

of the time were NYC-based, and because NYC was the home of the *New York Clipper*, the nation’s premier newspaper for baseball reporting. The Protoball database shows the following numbers for the NYC Metro area, compared to the total number of clubs nationwide:⁴

Year	Total clubs, Metro NYC	Total clubs, non-Metro NYC	Total clubs, Nationwide	Percent in Metro NYC
1857	71	51	122	58%
1858	106	156	262	40%
1859	353	343	696	50%
1860	567	742	1309	43%
1866 ⁵	825	3068	3893	21%

These numbers show that as early as 1858, baseball was being played OUTSIDE Metro NYC more than INSIDE. And that as the years progressed, Metro NYC constituted less and less a portion of the national baseball experience. The numbers on the post-Civil War explosion in baseball show it occurred overwhelmingly outside Metro NYC.

In 2014 baseball historian Richard Hershberger did a similar study for the journal *Base Ball*.⁶ Working off the smaller numbers of clubs we had proof of at the time, Hershberger came up with similar conclusions: “1858 was the breakout year for the rest of the country.”

This all makes sense from the standpoint of population. In 1860 Metro NYC comprised only 4% of the population of the United States. 96% of the people, and 96% of the potential ballplayers, lived elsewhere.

No serious person would label Sunbury, Pennsylvania or Camden, New Jersey the center of baseball in 1866. But future baseball historiography should pay more attention to happenings in the Camdens and Sunburys of the U.S., and less to happenings in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

1 William Hooper, “Our National Game,” *Appleton’s*, Feb. 25, 1871.

2 See Bruce Allardice, “Brooklyn Rules!”, *Origins Committee Newsletter*, Dec. 2021.

3 New York *Daily Herald*, Feb. 13, 1857; New York *Times*, March 3, 1870; New York *Clipper*, Jan. 20, 1866, Jan. 5, 1867, Dec. 20, 1856. Williamsburg is today part of Brooklyn, Tremont part of the Bronx.

4 Count as of June 1, 2022. The handful of clubs in Canada at this time don’t change the conclusions here, and if counted would only strengthen the non-NYC case.

The Protoball listing of pre-pro clubs is fairly comprehensive through 1866.

5 The Civil War of 1861-65 skewed baseball’s growth, and thus the numbers for those years are not shown.

6 Richard Hershberger, "The Antebellum Growth and Spread of the New York Game," *Base Ball*, vol. 8 (2014), pp. 134-149. The article defined Metro NYC more expansively to include the five boroughs, Westchester County, and four counties in northeast New Jersey, and used a formula to account for clubs disbanding.

At the Old Ball Game

By Bob Tholkes

A time trip to the Silver Ball match for the championship of New England between the Harvard Base Ball Club and the Lowell Base Ball Club of Boston, Saturday, June 1, 1867, at the Olympic Base Ball Club grounds, near Park Street, Medford. The most frequent attendance estimate was that 5,000 spectators jammed a field that usually accommodated only a few hundred. Harvard broke open a tie game in the fourth, going ahead by eleven runs, and stave off a Lowell rally to win, 39-28 in a total elapsed time of 3 hours and 15 minutes.

Time to catch one of the special trains to the ball game! They leave the Boston and Maine Railroad depot, running 15 minutes apart, beginning at 2 o'clock, P. M.; the game is set to begin at 3 o'clock. The game will be the "conquering" game in the best-of-three series; Harvard squared matters last Saturday, winning 32-26 at Jarvis Field in Cambridge. Today's match is at the required neutral ground, six miles from Boston in the village of Medford. A presumably neutral umpire, Hicks Hayhurst of the Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, is also on hand; he had also umpired the first two games of the match.

closing the inning, after scoring 4—39 to 28.
The following is the score:

Harvards	Outs.	Runs	Lowells	Outs.	Runs.
Sprague, c. f.	.. 3	5	Lovett, p.	3	3
Smith, l. f.	.. 4	5	Joslyn, 2d b.	2	4
Hunnswell, d.	.. 1	6	Alline, r. f.	.. 2	4
Flagg, c. 4	3	Rogers, c. f.	.. 2	4
Parker, 3d b.	.. 4	2	Lowell, l. f.	.. 5	1
Ames, 2d b.	.. 4	4	Sumner, 2d b.	.. 3	2
McKim, r. f.	.. 2	4	Wilder, c.	.. 5	2
Shaw, 1st b.	.. 1	5	Jewell, 1st b.	.. 2	5
Willard, s. stop	.. 4	3	Thompson, s. stop	.. 3	3
	27	39		27	29

RUNS MADE IN EACH INNING

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total.
Harvards	.. 5	1	5	12	9	0	1	2	4	39
Lowells	.. 3	1	7	0	6	1	10	0	0	29

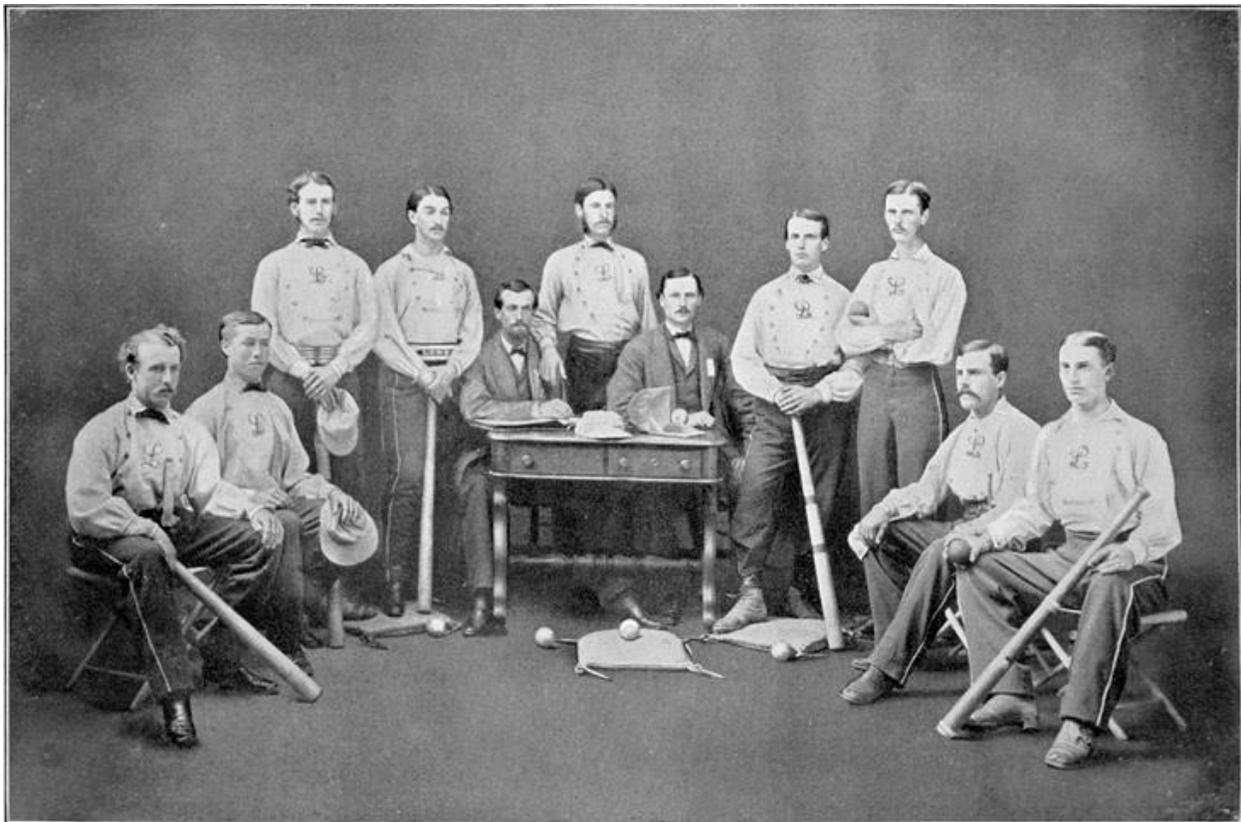
Home Runs—Rogers of Lowell 1
Left on Bases—Harvard—Hunnswell 1, Flagg 1, Parker 2, Shaw 2, Willard 1—7. Lowell—Sumner 1
Flys Caught—Harvard—Hunnswell 2, Flagg 1, Ames 1, Parker 1, Shaw 4, Willard 1—10. Lowell—Lovett 1, Joslyn 1, Alline 2, Rogers 2, Sumner 2, Lowell 1, Wilder 3, Thompson 1—13.
Flys Missed—Harvard—Sprague 2, Smith 1, Hunnswell 1, McKim 1—5. Lowell—Joslyn 1, Alline 2, Lowell 3, Sumner 1, Jewell 1, Wilder 1—3.
Passed Balls—Flagg 9, Wilder 10.
Struck Out—Harvard—Parker 1. Lowell—Lowell 1
Umpire—E. H. Hayhurst of the Athletic Club, Philadelphia.
Scorers—Harvard—Schuyler Van Rensselaer. Lowell—Charles L. Fuller
Time of Game—Three hours and nineteen minutes
At the close of the game the silver ball was delivered

Boston Journal, June 3, 1867

The field turns out to be an unenclosed pasture, rough and uneven and with post holes for the players to avoid. It will be tough to make brilliant fielding plays, but doesn't disadvantage either club. Clearing the field of the crush of spectators proves a greater difficulty, and after twenty minutes of the best efforts of police and members of the host club they continue to crowd the foul lines, press on the edges of the outfield, and make their jobs difficult for the scorers (one supplied by each club) and reporters trying to prepare shorthand reports.

Both clubs being composed of young gentlemen of social standing, a certain amount of decorum could be expected from their supporters, but instead the hisses, jeers, and insults typical of crowds of street roughs fill the air as the game progresses. The youth of, particularly, Harvard's supporters, and the fact that wagers amounting to thousands of dollars are riding on the outcome, seem to be combining to bring out the worst in the crowd.

A final, mass misbehavior of the crowd mars the ninth and final inning: the Lowells, who batted first, fail to tie the score. Many in the crowd, thinking the game concluded (hundreds are believed to be seeing their first baseball game), swarm the field to celebrate. Hayhurst does his best to get the word across that the inning must be finished before he can declare a victor. Though the Harvards assist him, darkness approaches before the field can be sufficiently cleared to continue. To their credit, the Lowells forebear dragging out the game in hopes that Hayhurst would call the game a draw because of darkness and the crowd's interference, and retire the Harvards as soon as may be.



W. H. Alline G. B. Wilder J. D'W. Lovett (Capt.) Gardner J. Lowell W. B. Joslin
H. J. Burton C. L. Fuller W. C. Page A. Crosby F. H. Sumner

LOWELL BASEBALL NINE, 1866

Postscript: The Lowell Club's upstanding behavior on June 1 was somewhat tarnished later in the month, when allegations that the match had been "heaved" prompted the club to launch an investigation, and again in August, when the Lowells insisted on issuing a challenge to Harvard to defend its championship, when the school was out of session and its players scattered. Since it could not answer the challenge within the time allowed by New England championship rules, it was forced to surrender the Silver Ball.

Potpourri

**Purists grouching that baseball is a "small potatoes game" for kids.
From the *Buffalo Morning Express*, Oct. 20, 1859**

BASE BALL—WHO PLAYS THE GENUINE GAME?

—Do our Base Ball Clubs play the game of the “National Association”—the New York and Brooklyn club game? If so they are respectfully informed by the *New York Tribune* that that style of Base Ball—what is falsely called the “National” game—is no more like the genuine game of base ball than single wicket is like a full field of cricket. It says, the Clubs who have formed what they choose to call the “National Association,” play a bastard game, worthy only of boys of ten years of age.

The remarks of the *Tribune* upon the game are called out by the talk of a match at Base Ball with the Eleven Cricketers of England. It is solicitous for the maintenance of the dignity of the illustrious “bats” and “bowlers,” and anxious lest they should lower it by consenting to throw away their skill and science upon such school boy play as it esteems the New York Ball game. It says:—
 “The only genuine game is what is known as the ‘Massachusetts Game,’ and if the Englishmen desire to be fairly matched, they must not permit themselves to be deluded by any men playing the small potatoe game recognized by the ‘National Association.’ It would be no more honor for the English Eleven to beat the best nine that could be selected, playing the New York game, than it would be to beat at cricket the best Eleven they could pick from any ordinary school in England. If they want to find foes worthy of their steel; let them challenge the ‘Excelsior’ Club, of Upton, Massachusetts, now the Champion Club of New England, and which Club could probably beat, with the greatest ease, the best New York nine, and give them three to one.

“The Englishmen may be assured that to whip any nine playing the New York baby game will never be recognized as a national triumph.”

We have not the least idea whether it is the “National Association” game or the “Massachusetts” game that our Clubs play, but we suppose it must be the latter, as we are certain their sport is no “child’s play.”

I Hate Cricket! (from the McArthur Ohio *Old Democrat*, Oct. 15, 1857)

Wit and Humor.

The Game of Cricket.

Doesticks confides to the Knickerbocker his impressions of a Cricket match. We extract the following:

Cricket!—well, hereafter when I want a synonyme for all that is intolerably dull and stupid, I shall say, Cricket! When I want to express a grand climax of spiritless dejection, I shall remark, Cricket! When I desire to say of some man against whom I have a mortal spite, that he is grim-visaged, jaundiced, melancholic, dismal and flat, I shall simply call him a cricketer, and then I shall dodge.— And if any man accuses me in like manner, I shall take out a warrant for defamation of character, and sue him for maliciously damaging my character to a huge extent.

I went to Hoboken with D—— who

Latest Protoball Additions

Total numbers—As of June 23, 2022, the Protoball Pre-Pro (pre-1871) Database contained 11,282 clubs and 3,880 games, with a further 3,500 new games in the searchable Tholkes RIM file but not yet entered into the Pre-Pro database.

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 429 U.S. entries, including 150 for cricket, 95 for wicket, 61 for town ball, 21 for old cat, and 15 for single-wicket cricket.

265 early U.S. baseball fields are described, including baseball fields in all 50 states.

New countries—Recently baseball entries for The Comoros and Seychelles have been added.

New early Baseball in Savannah—Recently **Bruce Allardice**, always searching for early baseball in the South, found a reference to baseball playing being banned in the streets of Savannah, Georgia in 1845.

Find of the Month

Base Ball Nuts?

The Auburn NY *Journal and Advertiser*, Jan. 17, 1838 prints a letter from a traveler to Boston, who says that at the McLean Asylum in Charlestown, "the males are engaged in playing at bowls, quoits, base ball, ..."

A first mention of “base ball” in Boston?

Research Requests

Media Firsts Project Announced--The Origins Committee is starting a new initiative called the Media Firsts Project, dedicated to compiling a list of firsts related to baseball and the media. Some of the questions that this project will seek to answer include:

When was the first media credential issued for a baseball game?

When was the first press box established at a baseball venue?

Who was the first baseball player quoted in a newspaper?

What was the first instance of a newspaper publishing betting odds for a baseball game?

And much more!

Anyone interested in contributing to the Media Firsts Project can reach out to Steve Sisto at stevesisto@gmail.com.

Protoball has found and listed baseball in all but seven of the world's 200 countries. But we're still looking for baseball in the tiny countries of Andorra and Liechtenstein (Europe); Dominica (Caribbean); Maldives, Timor-Leste (Asia); Sao Tome, and Equatorial Guinea (Africa). Plus the UK dependencies Montserrat and the Isle of Man.



BULLETIN BOARD

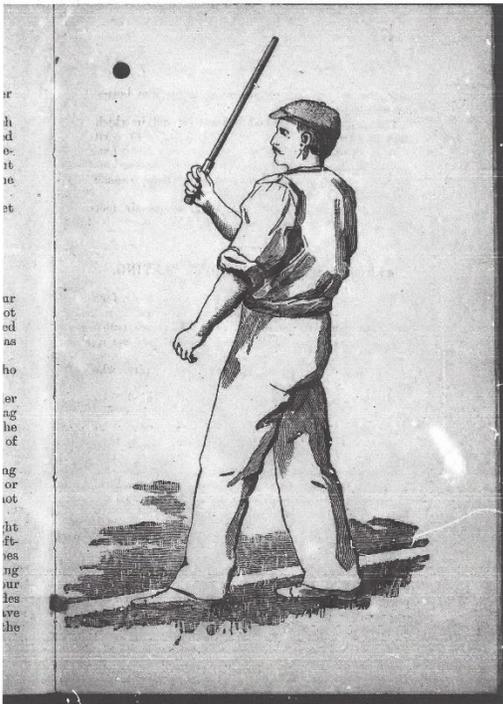
Bruce Allardice's article in the December issue of *Baseball Research Journal*, a first-ever statistical analysis of baseball 1866-70 titled "Runs, Runs, and More Runs," won the 2022 SABR/McFarland Award for Best Baseball History Article. You can read it at <https://sabr.org/journal/article/the-nineteenth-century-runs-runs-and-more-runs/>

This year's SABR national convention (Aug. 17-21 in Baltimore) will feature many presentations of interest to readers of this newsletter. See <https://sabr.org/convention> for more details. Of special interest is the meeting of the 19th Century Committee Thursday, Aug. 18th at noon. See you there!

MLB's official "Our Game" blog, headed by **John Thorn**, is always a delight to read. John is currently publishing a series "Baseball in 25 Objects" which often has an Origins-Pre-Pro Baseball article. One example is his May 23rd article on "The Gotham Pin," highlighting the 1855 NYC Gotham club. See <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/the-gotham-pin-f4a444c68914> for more.

The Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Baseball Conference in Cooperstown featured presentations relating to pre-1871 baseball, including Richard Hershberger's on Muscular Christianity and Baseball, Joanne Hulbert on Wicket, Tom Gilbert on the Brooklyn Atlantics, and Jonothan Popovich on the Evolution of The Elysian Fields.

Bruce Allardice, who doubles as a Civil War Historian, had an article published in the Emerging Civil War blog on baseball in the Confederacy. "Baseball: The Confederacy's National Pastime," [Emerging Civil War \(www.emergingcivilwar.com\)](http://www.emergingcivilwar.com), April 16, 2022



From Martin Wilson's *Changers Rules* (1893)