

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. 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.

Editor's Note: Our great friend and Origins mentor, Larry McCray, suddenly passed away last December. SABR issued the following notice of his passing, and a tribute to his memory. The McCray family plans a service in his memory on Memorial Day.

<https://sabr.org/latest/in-memoriam-larry-mccray/>

When Larry McCray, one of the foremost historians of baseball's early origins, received SABR's [Henry Chadwick Award](#) in 2017, Major League Baseball Official Historian John Thorn wrote that he was the man "most responsible for the new public understanding of baseball's predecessor games."



McCray, who [died at the age of 81](#) on December 26, 2023, created the vast and invaluable [Protoball Project](#), to help researchers locate and refine primary data on the evolution and spread of ball play from ancient times to up to 1870, just before the first professional baseball league began in the United States.

Enlisting the efforts of hundreds of other "diggers," as they are termed on the site, McCray led a project that expanded our collective knowledge of the game in new ways. He served as Guest Editor of the special Protoball issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, featuring more than thirty articles on this long neglected and little understood area.

McCray was named to MLB's Special Origins Committee in 2011 and he also chaired SABR's [Origins Research Committee](#) for many years, attracting new diggers as well as interested readers in the subject of baseball's earliest days. McCray was recognized with the [Bob Davids Award](#), SABR's highest honor, in 2018.

Lawrence E. McCray's life outside of baseball was also exemplary. Born on May 21, 1942, in Utica, New York, he graduated from Union College with a BA and BEE in 1965 and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship for 1967–68 in India. He received his Ph.D from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1974. His dissertation, "The Politics of Regulation," was awarded the APSA's E.E. Schattschneider Prize as the best dissertation in American government and politics for 1974.

He began his career at the Environmental Protection Agency, where he organized and implemented reforms in environmental decision-making processes. Then, as a member of the Carter administration, he was the first program director of the US Regulatory Council. He was the founding director of the policy division at the National Academy of Sciences from 1981 to 1998; his 1983 report, *Risk Assessment in the Federal Government: Managing the Process*, is often credited as the source of a new paradigm for federal risk regulation. Following his retirement, he was a mentor in science policy at MIT's Center for International Studies, where he enjoyed advising many graduate students.

He was an avid hiker, tennis player, and endurance cyclist — who once biked to every home ballpark in the Boston Red Sox farm system along the East Coast.

He is survived by his wife Alexa; children J and Malika; grandchildren Max, Miles and Nora; son-in-law Brian and daughter-in-law Erin. A celebration of life is planned for the spring of 2024 in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Getting to Know Elle -- A Progress Report on Sri Lanka's Flashy Baserunning Variant

By Larry McCray

Editor's Note: *Larry wrote a draft of this article in the fall of 2023, intending to flesh it out later. To honor his memory and contributions to baseball's origins, I present it with only light editing.*

Someone informed Protoball about an unusual baserunning game known as Elle being played in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) in south Asia, and we were interested in learning

how that might have happened. Sources in English appear to be limited at this point, but several YouTube videos reflect a joyous and generally familiar pastime. We'd like to know a lot more about how it has evolved.

When I first tuned into a video of Elle, this lusty game seemed to resemble someone's attempt to mimic MLB's annual 'Home Run Derby',-- transplanted, for some reason, to an island nation just south of India. I saw a pitcher lofting a baseball-sized orb to a burly teammate, who slammed it hard with a 'well-seasoned' bamboo bat, sending it into a large, well-manned outfield, often beyond camera range.

But . . . Whoa! . . . in the next instant, a barefoot teammate sped past the batsman at full speed, immediately in front of the batting area, and then traced a curved loop that took him around to the area we baseballers might think of as third base . . . pay dirt, in this game.



Elle game in progress. From Wikimedia

Well, welcome to Elle (say '*elleh*'), Sri Lanka's unique baserunning game! The batsman stood and watched the play unfold. In this game, his job was not to be a runner/scorer. He is just a good hitter.

Reportedly, a hundred or more Sri Lankan Elle clubs are now active, and the collection of YouTube bits are indicative of its popularity (try a simple search for 'elle sri lanka'). One site even lists 10 Elle clubs playing in Italy-- a country perhaps has less interested in baserunning games than most of the world's cultures.

Watching a few videos may prove entertaining but won't yet provide a solid understanding of the game's rules to a Western reader. One website lists 80 different Elle rules but doesn't give full explanatory detail.

The Game on the Field

In general: The game features teams of 16 players trying to score on big hits during innings limited by the number of pitches delivered or by reaching a specified timer period. Runners (sometimes referred to as 'assistant runners') try to complete a circuit of four 'stopping points.' Retirements come from hit balls caught on the fly and runners hit by thrown balls or tags between stopping points, which serve as safe havens.

The rules permit the use of a tennis ball as the batted object, but also allow a dried sea mango (that is *cerbera mangha*, to all you botanists) as an alternative, and it seems plausible that this fruit served as the ball in the past. On the videos, the ball appeared to be a sphere, and behaved like a tennis ball would. I have not come across any discussions of how the Elle has changed during or since colonial times.

Most videos appear to take place on large fields conducive to long hits. Another source recommends [post-harvest?] paddy fields and shorelines as suitable for the game.

About The Origin and Evolution of Elle

I have not yet seen a satisfactory account of the history and evolution of Elle. I have not come across accounts of how the game has changed over time.

Sri Lanka gained independence from Great Britain in 1948, after 133 years as a British colony. It still takes pride in its international cricket successes, but Elle doesn't appear to resemble cricket closely beyond its hitting and fielding. I have seen no claim that the game evolved from cricket.

One might ask if Elle might have evolved, at least in part, from rounders, or, possibly, from earlier forms of English base ball. There is reportedly newspaper documentation of Elle being played (with its players wearing "European clothes") in 1911, but current videos do not point to an English origin for Elle. They do include some as-yet undocumented conjecture that the game was played on the island many centuries ago—a 2000-year history, in fact. Which, if correct, would point to the origins of Elle being prior to British rule. Initial web searches for rounders or baseball in Ceylon and/or Sri Lanka are not productive. Protoball entries show that cricket was played in Ceylon

as early as 1832, and during the 1889 Spalding world baseball tour, a stop was made in Ceylon for a quick game.

The *Chicago Inter Ocean*, March 10, 1889, reporting on the Spalding tour, says that in Colombo, Ceylon, they encountered natives playing a bat-ball game that involved soaking the runner, and looked very much like the old "town ball." The report speculates that this form of bat-ball is native to Ceylon, and predates baseball. Was this "Elle?" And did this encounter prompt Spalding's later comment that throughout the tour he met with local bat-ball games, suggesting that forms of baseball evolved in many lands?



Elle, c. 1890. From John Thorn's "Our Game" blog, Jan. 30, 2023, courtesy David Block

Elle is sometimes referred to in Ceylon as poor man's cricket. While Elle doesn't have much in common with cricket, some traces of past rounders play are seen in today's Elle. Games are typically played to two 'innings', which are defined by the number of pitches made or elapsed time, and outs are called when hit balls are caught on the fly and when baserunners are hit with thrown balls while not at one of the four designated "stopping points." on the running routes. Thus, the four stopping points (bases) serve as 'safe havens' for runners, as is found in rounders and baseball. A batsman is accorded only three good balls to hit or is retired, as in some past versions of rounders, although current rounders rules allow only one Good Ball to be received by a batsman. Team scores likely make what baseballers would think of as long (multibase) hits.

Modern Elle and 1850's Rounders

It may interest readers to compare today's Elle rules to an 1856 summary of rounders in the Manual of English Sports, by "'Stonehenge."

1. The stick resembles a common rolling pin (did that favor two-handed batting?)
2. Bases are arranged in a regular pentagon (five bases, not four}
3. 10 to 30 players are involved
4. balls are tossed, not thrown, to the batsmen
5. fielders are arranged outside the pentagon of bases
6. batsmen are put out by three failures to connect with a 'good ball,' by hitting a ball foul, a fly out or a bound out
7. runners are put out if hit by a ball when off a base
8. a score is given for each base attained
9. a feeder can feign a pitch

Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 appear to apply to Elle as now played. This in itself does not mean that Elle evolved from rounders -- and the separation of hitters' and runners' functions, the bamboo bat, balls fed by teammates, and other Elle features were unlikely parts of early rounders in England.

The Current Popularity of Elle

It is mentioned, on one site, that Elle was named the "Sri Lanka National Sport" in the 70's. (Another Sri Lanka site calls *volleyball* "the national sport.")

Some other first impressions

1. Suitable playing sites include post-harvest paddy fields and shorelines . . . and Elle grounds, where most of the online videos have taken place.
2. I was surprised to note how many fielders were in active motion *before* the batsman actually hit the ball, possibly because they anticipated by setup motion where the

batsman was hoping to send the ball.

Some introductory sources

We will update our Protoball glossary entry as more is learned: the 2023 entry is at <https://protoball.org/Elle>

Wikipedia has an introduction of Elle at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elle_\(sport\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elle_(sport))

My favorite Sri Lankan source is <https://www.srilankaelle.com/Histry.html>

What was the First Baseball Park?

By Bruce Allardice

The Protoball website Chronologies, 1858.2, contains an extended discussion among baseball experts as to defining a “Ball Park,” and what was the earliest “Ball Park.” This article will attempt to synthesize scholarship on this topic, and the disputes which (largely) stem from defining what a “Baseball Park” is.

Early baseball reporting usually spoke of the “grounds” at which a game was played—quite often the named “grounds” of the host team. For example, the August 22, 1860 match game between the Eureka and Adriatic club of Newark was played at the “Eureka [club] grounds.”¹ Other newspaper accounts speak of games played at county fair grounds, town squares, and other open spaces.²

Most early baseball was played in open, non-enclosed, fields such as the Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey. Defined as simply as possible, any grounds predominately used for baseball could be considered a baseball park. However, the consensus among experts is that the concept of “baseball park” must embrace features beyond the mere grounds where baseball was played. While the Elysian Fields would thus qualify as a **baseball grounds** (one of the earliest), under this expanded definition it wouldn’t qualify as a **baseball park**.

The term “ball park” didn’t emerge until a decade or more of baseball match games. A search of the major online newspaper databases shows that the first use of the term “ballpark” (ball park, baseball park) was in a Philadelphia newspaper in 1866.³

One difficulty is that there isn’t one, accepted, definition of “ball park”—at least, not one that fits the realities of early baseball. One modern definition, in Wikipedia, defines

“ballpark” thus: “A **ballpark**, or **baseball park**, is a type of sports venue where baseball is played. ... A larger ballpark may also be called a **baseball stadium** because it shares characteristics with other outdoor stadiums.”

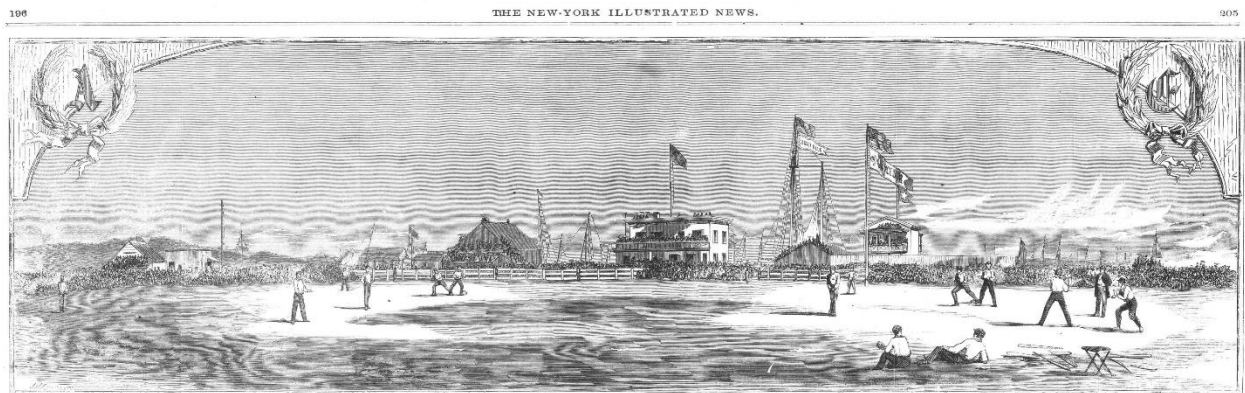
The definition given by Wikipedia is a bit tautological—and for purposes of this article, too vague. Historian Bob Tholkes broke it down further:

“A ballpark for us is a place where baseball is played; even major league parks like the Polo Grounds were built originally for other purposes, and used for other purposes after baseball became their most frequent purpose.

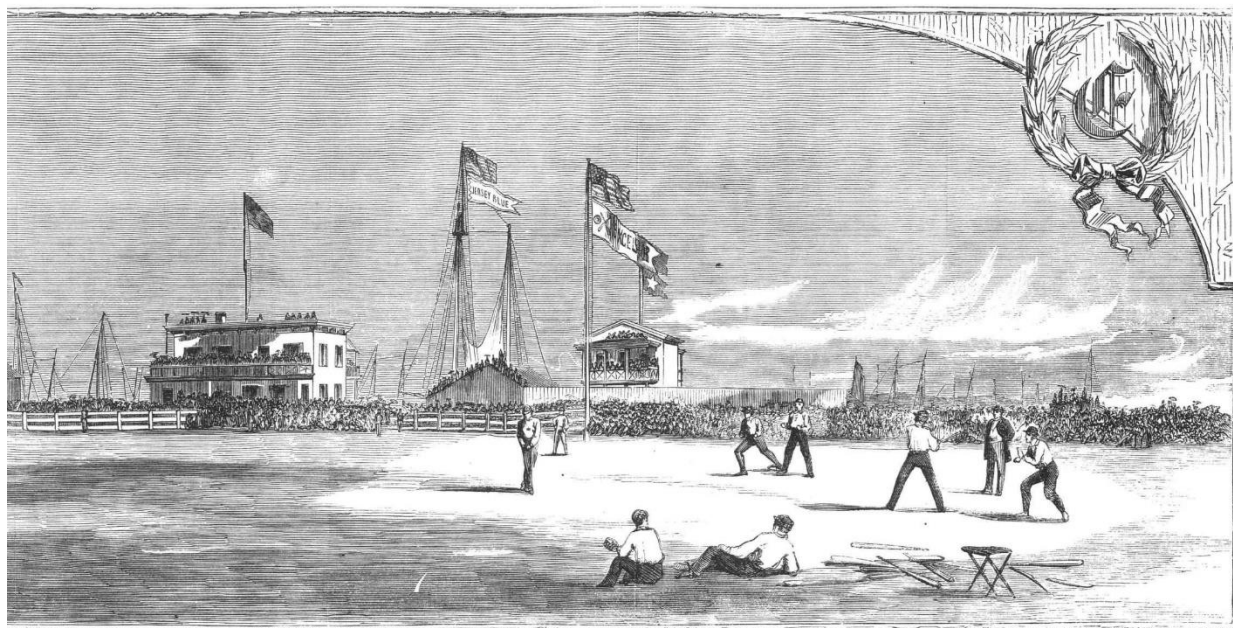
More than one category of "first" is involved: first enclosure used for baseball, first enclosure built for baseball, first enclosure built for baseball for the purpose of charging admission.

Enclosure also affected play by placing a barrier in the path of the ball, and the fielder, necessitating a ground rule.”⁴

There were early games played on grounds described as “enclosed,” but either detail is lacking, or the “enclosure” is not specifically for purposes of a baseball game. An 1857 game in Boston saw the Massapoags of Sharon visiting Boston. The Massapoags “obtained permission from the city to make an enclosure on the [Boston] Commons.” The *New York Atlas* of August 13, 1859, reporting the August 2, 1859, baseball game between the Excelsior and Knickerbocker clubs at the Excelsior club's grounds in South Brooklyn, noted: “There was also a large number of carriages around the enclosure.” However, as historian Tom Gilbert observed: “the mere existence of a rail fence surrounding or partially surrounding the Excelsiors' grounds in Red Hook does not make it a ballpark in any sense. ... The rail fence that might keep a carriage or a horse off the playing field-- but not a spectator.”⁵



Excelsior Grounds, 1860. From *The New-York Illustrated News*, August 4, 1860.



OF BROOKLYN, AT THE EXCELSIOR CLUB GROUNDS, SOUTH BROOKLYN, ON THURSDAY, JULY 19.—FROM A SKETCH MADE BY OUR OWN ARTIST.

Detail from above, showing fencing more clearly.

Historian Richard Hershberger weighed in on what constituted an “enclosure”:

"Enclosed" was the term of art used at the time. The confusion in the 1859 cite is that this term of art was not yet established. Jump forward a decade and "enclosed ground" means a board fence. This usually implied the charging of admission, but not always. Occasionally it was for privacy. An example is the Knickerbockers, when they moved from the Elysian Fields to the St. George grounds. The St. George Cricket Club [of New York], for that matter, did not usually admit spectators, except for infrequent grand matches. The Olympics of Philadelphia had their own enclosed ground by 1864. They later started charging admission to match games, but initially this was a privacy fence. So it is complicated.⁶

Historian Peter Morris also emphasizes the “charging admission” feature, with its connection to professional baseball:

The fences at a baseball stadium now denote home runs.... But such walls were not originally constructed with [home runs] in mind. Indeed their original intention was to keep people out, and thereby to make professional baseball possible.

As early as the 1850s the idea of professional baseball was being actively considered. The largest obstacle was the impracticality of collecting admission to an open field.⁷

The most agreed-upon candidates for first “baseball Park” are:

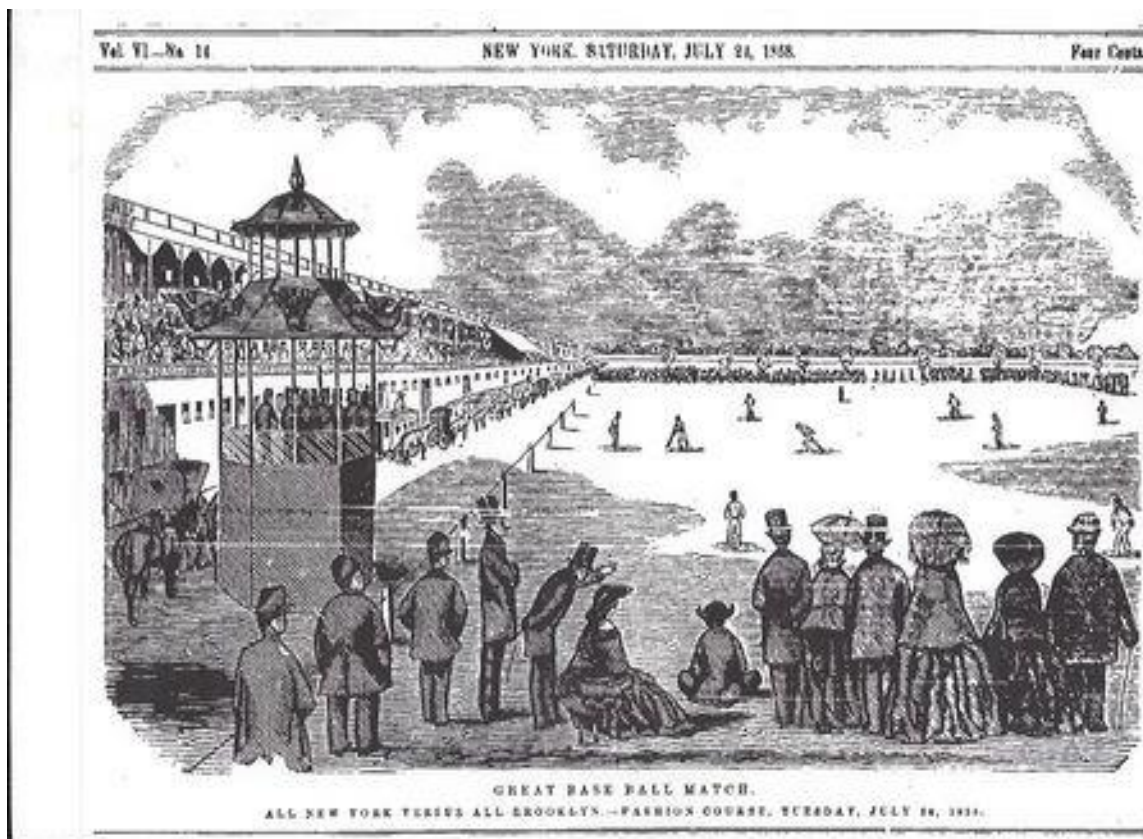
- 1) The Fashion Race Course in Flushing, NY (near the present-day Shea Stadium), where an 1858 all-star game was played;
- 2) Camac's Woods in Philadelphia, site of baseball games starting in 1860;
- 3) Union Grounds in Brooklyn, site of games in 1862 and thereafter.

Each site has its proponents, depending on how one defines a "ball park."

The Fashion Race Course, Brooklyn

The **Fashion Race Course** was a horse-racing track that, in 1858, hosted 3 "all-star" baseball games between New York and Brooklyn ballplayers. The "Fashion Course was accessible by rail, omnibus, and trolley lines, many of which connected with the ferries that linked Brooklyn to Manhattan. It had a grandstand so the spectators could view the match in comfort. A baseball diamond was installed on the track's infield — the grassy area enclosed by the perimeter of the race course's interior fence. It was decided to remove the turf covering this area and lay out a diamond on the bare dirt. The dirt had to be leveled and rolled to provide a proper playing surface. Critics observed that it would have been better if the turf had been left in place and rolled to smooth it out."⁸

It was an enclosed grounds, and spectators were charged admission—10 cents, the same as the Union Grounds did in 1862, though added charges could up the price to 50 cents.⁹ However, it was not a stadium specifically erected for baseball, nor intended for baseball games. The 1858 game was in fact a one-off (or more accurately, a three-off, as it was a three-game series). Historian Tom Gilbert notes that the admission receipts were intended by Fashion Course operators to cover the costs of cleanup after the games, rather than as a payment to the players/clubs. In fact the games generated a "profit" of \$71.¹⁰, which was donated to charity.¹⁰



New York *Clipper*, July 24, 1858

The Fashion Race Course folded a couple years after this game.

Camac's Woods, Philadelphia

Philadelphia baseball historian Jerry Casway advances Philadelphia's **Camac's Woods** as the first "ball park."

Determining the first enclosed baseball field is a matter for debate. A significant criterion for inclusion is whether the playing site was adapted from another recreational venue such as a race track, fairgrounds, cricket pitch, skating rink, or a parade field. Candidacy should be solely based on whether the grounds were specifically erected and intended for baseball games where admission was charged. ...

This site [Camac's Woods], at 12th and Berks Streets, was part of a popular public park, noted for its manicured lawns and sumptuous strolling gardens. In September 1859 part of these grounds was prepared as a cricket pitch for the All-England Cricket exhibition series. The soon-to-be St. Georges Cricket Grounds was resurfaced, leveled, and enclosed by a "broad fence." Wooden stands were erected for 1,500 spectators and benches surrounded the playing area. After the English cricket series the enclosed grounds attracted local baseball clubs. The original fence was raised and modified. A wooden clubhouse was built and "Barlow board

benches” were set up for female spectators. Admission fees of 25 cents were frequently charged. On Tuesday, July 24, 1860, the Olympics of Philadelphia played the St. George baseball team. Using New York rules, the Olympics won, 25-17.

Although Camac Woods (St. Georges Cricket Ground) was originally intended for the cricket exhibition series, the site was renovated and turned into an enclosed baseball facility that charged admission. The Olympics game, as a result, was the most qualified candidate for being the first game played in an enclosed site set up for baseball.¹¹



<https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/search/camac?type=edismax>

Camac's Woods hosted many entertainment ventures in 1860 in which admissions were, presumably, charged, including a circus, high-wire acts, balloon ascensions, concerts and boxing. Newspaper reports of the August 16, 1860 boxing extravaganza,

featuring John Heenan, the heavyweight champion, note that a “high board fence” separated the paying customers from those outside. Police kept the often drunk, unruly crowd from breaking the fence down and rushing in. Admission was 50 cents. Newspaper reports didn’t specify whether this board fence was a permanent structure, or one erected just for this event.11.5

The nature of the enclosure at Camac leaves room for doubt as to how “enclosed” it was—for baseball purposes, at least. A photo of Camac’s Woods, c. 1861, shows it had an enclosing fence all right--a rail fence, that people could see through or over if they wished. I’m doubtful this fence was used, or could be used, as a strict enclosure of a ball field, let alone an enclosure where the host could charge admission. The pictured fence also encloses wooded areas that couldn’t be part of a baseball field. It is of course possible that the “board fence” was a fence on the inside of the rail fence, or that, by 1861, the “board fence” of 1860 was no more.

There is also a question whether Camac’s primary use was for baseball, given the plethora of cricket matches, concerts et al. staged there.

During the Civil War Camac’s Woods were used as a training ground for Union army troops. At the end of the Civil War Camac’s Woods were converted to a housing development.11.7

Union Grounds, Brooklyn

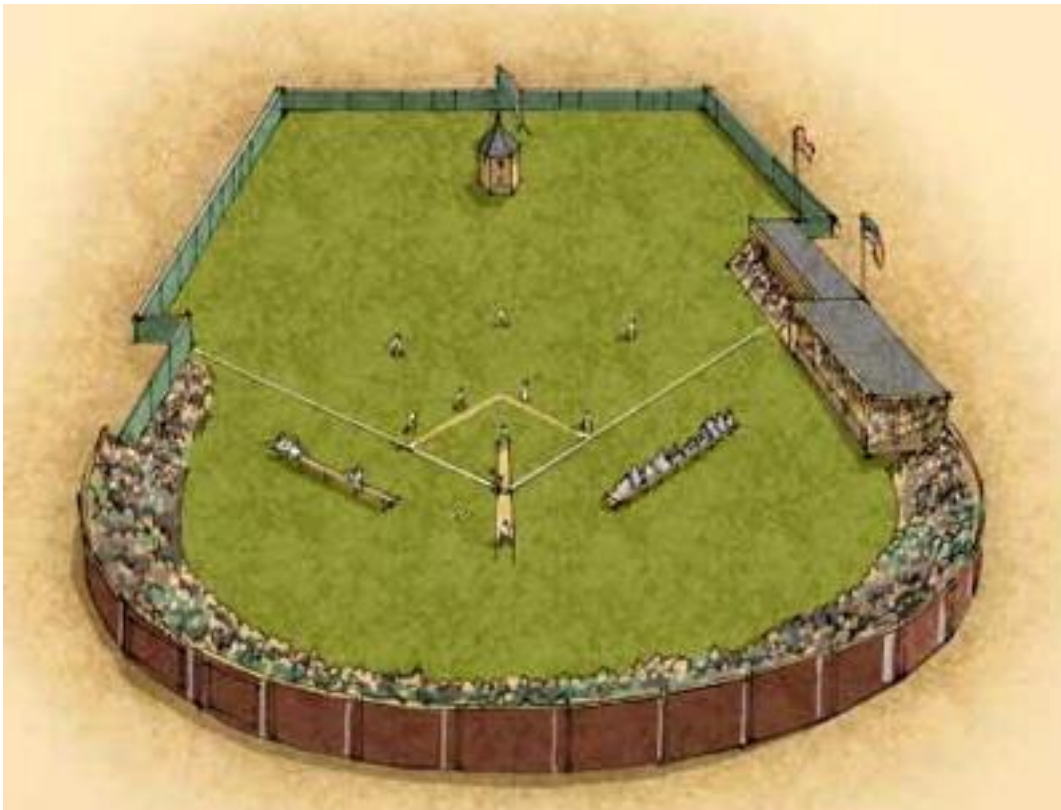
The history of the **Union Grounds** is described in a website on Brooklyn baseball parks:

The Union Grounds, formally known as the Union Base Ball and Cricket Grounds, were run by William Cammeyer, who was proprietor of a skating pond in the Williamsburgh area, bounded by Harrison Avenue, Rutledge Street, Lynch Street, and Marcy Avenue. Cammeyer, reputedly after a conversation with Henry Chadwick on how to make profit from his land over more than two months, set out to convert the grounds for baseball for the summer of 1862, and performed a fine job with some speed. Seating was available for around 1,500 spectators, but many more could be accommodated around the extremely large field without being likely to interfere with play. An important aspect of the arrangement was to "provide a suitable place for ball playing, where ladies can witness the game without being annoyed by the rowdies who attend some of the first-class matches." Rather than charge the home teams rent, Cammeyer decided on a new idea: charging spectators for admission. The original fee was 10 cents. The field is reputed to be the first enclosed baseball park, although this has not been definitely established.

Cammeyer advertised that "none but first class clubs need apply" as tenants for the Union Grounds, and signed up the Eckford, Putnam, and Constellation Clubs.

Picked nines of players from the three tenant clubs played the first match at the grounds on May 15, 1862. Manolt's Side defeated McKinstry's Side, 17 to 15. McKinstry and Spencer, both of the Putnam club, won a bat and a ball from Cammeyer as reward for scoring the most runs for their teams. In addition, a band provided music for the spectators throughout proceedings. An estimated 3,000 visitors helped the Union Grounds to an auspicious beginning.

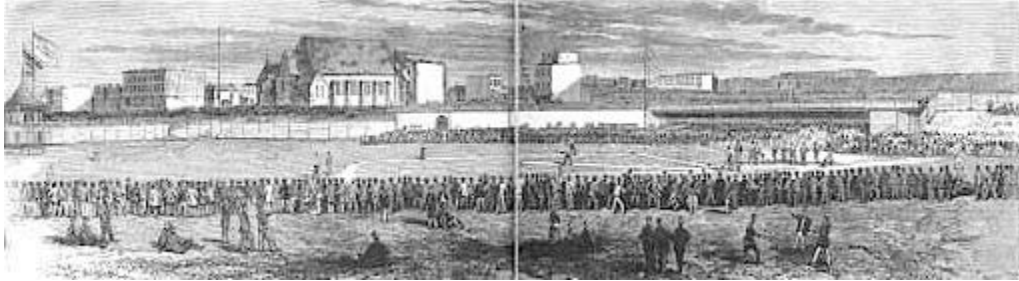
Aside from its early status as an enclosed field, the Union Grounds had one other highly unusual feature: a pagoda was in play in deep center field. This structure was three stories high, and during skating season it would be filled with lamps each evening to decorate the pond with glittering reflections. Although the site remained in operation as a rink during winter, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported in 1863 that the pagoda was scheduled to be removed. It ended up lasting as long as the grounds themselves, however.¹²



Union Grounds. From <http://www.covehurst.net/ddyte/brooklyn/union.html>

The Union Grounds fences, designed to keep out deadheads and undesirables, were 6-7 feet high, surrounding a field measuring 552 by 448 feet. A wooden stand provided seats for the ladies, while a pagoda-like structure sat in the middle of center field. While originally no admission fee was charged beyond that needed to maintain the grounds (as with the Fashion Race Course), the owners soon started sharing the income with the clubs.¹³

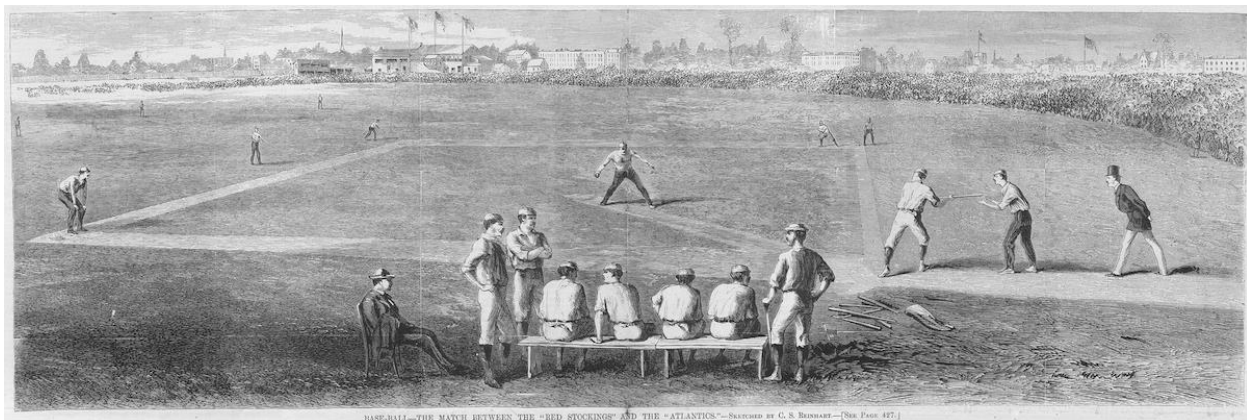
Using another set of criteria, the website “7 Oldest Ballparks in North America” lists the Union grounds in Brooklyn, in 1862, as the earliest ballpark (as opposed to baseball grounds) as being enclosed for the purpose of charging admission, plus hosting ballgames on a regular basis.¹⁴



Union Grounds, 1865. Per Library of Congress. Pagoda can be seen at left.

The concept of the Union Grounds was quickly followed. **Capitoline Ground**, in Brooklyn, shared most of the characteristics of the Union Grounds—enclosed grounds, regular baseball matches, admission fees. A converted skating pond, it was founded as a baseball park two years after the Union Grounds. The “national Champion” Brooklyn Atlantics made it their home park.¹⁵

The first baseball game was played there in 1864. Originally, it cost 10 cents to view a match game at Capitoline. That fee was raised to 25 cents for the 1866 “championship” game between the Brooklyn Atlantics and the Philadelphia Athletics, and to 50 cents for the famous 1870 game in which the Cincinnati Red Stockings, after 81 straight victories, finally lost (to the Atlantics).¹⁶



Capitoline Grounds, 1870. From *Harper's Weekly*, July 2, 1870

The Union Grounds were used by Major League Baseball teams as late as 1878. The grounds were demolished in 1883. Capitoline was demolished in 1880.

While other playing fields may have been partly "enclosed" before (perhaps to keep horses and cows and humans from tromping on the grounds?), the July 1858

NYC/Brooklyn Fashion Race Course game appears to stand as the first game at an enclosed venue, and the first game that charged admission, opening a door to a promising new way to help finance professional clubs. However, the Fashion Race Course wasn't erected as a baseball park, nor was it used as such except for this three-game series.

The Union Grounds were adapted from another use, but constructed with baseball in mind. The grounds were used for non-baseball events (just as modern stadiums host concerts and football games) but it appears that baseball was its predominant use.

Camac Woods had baseball admissions and an enclosure as early as 1860. However, the enclosure does not appear to have been of the kind commonly associated with ballparks. And Camac's Woods were not designed for, nor primarily used for, baseball.

Further insights are welcome.

1 New York *Clipper*, August 23, 1860.

2 cf. Protoball, Rochester fields, at https://protoball.org/Brown_Square.

3 Philadelphia *Daily Age*, April 24, 1866.

On a side note, the Guinness Book of Records lists Labatt Park in London, Ontario, Canada (est. 1877) as the oldest baseball diamond still being used as such. Clinton, MA claims its Fuller Field (est. 1878) as the oldest continuing baseball field in the U.S.

4 Email cited in Protoball, Chronologies 1858.2.

5 *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1857. Protoball, Chronologies 1858.2.

6 Protoball, Chronologies 1858.2.

7 Peter Morris, in *A Game of Inches* (Chicago, 2006) vol. 2, p. 46.

8 Robert H. Schaefer, "The Changes Wrought by the Great Base Ball Match of 1858," *Base Ball*, vol. 5 no. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 122-126.

9 John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York, 2011), p. 117.

10 Tom Gilbert, *How Baseball Happened* (David R. Godine, 2020), p. 164. Our Game blog, July 8, 2013, at <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/the-all-star-game-you-dont-know-cf8082747852>.

11 Jerrold Casway, "The First Enclosed Ballpark: Olympics of Philadelphia vs. St. George," in *Inventing Baseball: The 100 Greatest Games of the 19th Century* (SABR, 2013), pp. 32-33. See also Jerrold Casway, "Locating Philadelphia's Historic Ballfields" at <https://sabr.org/journal/article/locating-philadelphias-historic-ballfields/>

11.5 Philadelphia *Inquirer*, August 16, 1860; Philadelphia *Press*, August 16, 1860.

11.7 Philadelphia *Age*, May 25, 1864. Philadelphia *Inquirer*, January 24, 1887.

Philadelphia *Press*, November 2, 1867.

12 <http://www.covehurst.net/ddyte/brooklyn/union.html>. See also

http://www.protoball.org/Camac_Woods and sources cited there.

13 William Ryczek, *When Johnny Came Sliding Home: The Post-Civil War Baseball*

Boom, 1865-1870 (McFarland, 1998), pp. 29-31. William Ryczek, *Baseball's First Inning* (McFarland, 2009), pp. 185-187. *New York Clipper*, May 24, 1862.

14 <https://www.oldest.org/sports/ballparks-north-america/>

15 See <http://www.covehurst.net/ddyte/brooklyn/capitoline.html>

16 Ryczek, *When Johnny Came Sliding Home*, pp. 201-211. *New York Clipper*, February 27, 1864, October 13, 1866.

How Much Did Ballplaying Apostles Spread Baseball?

By Bruce Allardice

The historical consensus is that the game of baseball, or at least the variant New York rules baseball popularized and systematized by the New York City (NYC) Knickerbockers, spread from the New York Metropolitan area to the hinterlands. But less has been written on **HOW** the game spread. The notion that Alexander Cartwright carried baseballs and bat with them on his journey west, planting the seeds of baseball as they traveled, has been largely debunked. Far from being baseball's equivalent of Johnny Appleseed, Cartwright has been shown to have almost no impact on the game after leaving NYC in 1849 to journey overland to California.¹



Johnny Appleseed, or Alexander Cartwright?

More credible is the theory that several NYC ballplayers from the earliest teams—the Knickerbockers, Excelsiors and Atlantics in particular—moved to or visited other states and brought the game with them. And, as we’ll see below, that occurred, the question being to what extent it did.

Obviously, there are many different ways a cultural phenomenon can spread. While the internet wasn’t around in the 1850s (for better or worse!) there existed the print media. The game was also spread by personal contact. Students from throughout the U.S. attended school in NYC. People relocated from one city to another. People also traveled, for business or pleasure. The New York rules game could have, and did, spread in all these ways.

Some historians credit the spread to an early form of New York City “imperialism”:

New York City, the nation’s largest and most energetic city, exported the New York game to the rest of the nation through its players, traveling businessmen, and printed media, in a kind of “urban imperialism.”²

What is now known as the “NY Rules” game gestated from rules adopted by a few leading metro NYC [hereafter MNYC] clubs, notably the Knickerbockers, Gothams and Excelsiors. The rules were a matter of practice for these teams by 1854, and formally

adopted as the “national” rules at the “national” baseball conventions of 1857 and 1858. Admittedly, these “national” rules were concocted by a “national” convention that wasn’t at all national—in 1858 all the clubs represented were located in MNYC. Only a few years later, by 1860, the NY Rules game had (with few exceptions) swept the country. Given this era of limited travel, it is incredible how quickly the NY Rules game spread.

By 1858 baseball was played throughout the country. It had already expanded far beyond the boundaries of MNYC. Most areas didn’t need New Yorkers to teach them the baseball basics--because they already played it. A glance at the Protoball website of early baseball shows that by the beginning of 1858 baseball was already being played in CA, in IL, in MN, in MI. Baseball had been present in Philadelphia, PA as early as the 1830s, Massachusetts by 1853, and Canada (!) by 1854. Since modern research has shown that bat-ball games were already played throughout the U.S. (sometimes, but not always, labeled “base ball”), the shift from playing the local bat-ball variant to “base ball” was a nudge, not a violent shift.

As the New York game spread across the nation in the 1850s, it found a solid foundation that had been laid by the spread of Anglo-American ball-playing culture in the first half of the 19th century. The New York game was in no way alien to the people of the American West because they had their own baseball variant that emanated from the same cultural source and, therefore, it was a simple step to transition from the local baseball variant to the New York variant.³

Or as one Galveston youngster exclaimed in 1865 after watching “Yankee” army soldiers playing the New York game, “They have stolen our game of ‘townball’ and substituted a few additional features.”⁴

So how can we test the hypothesis that baseball-playing apostles, like later-day St. Pauls, were largely responsible for taking the NY Rules game outside the NYC Metro area 1854 (alternatively, 1857) to 1860? More precisely, can we measure their impact on baseball’s spread?

I’ve done a study of baseball in the U.S.’s twenty largest cities in 1860.⁵ All had baseball clubs by 1860. If MNYC apostles brought the game anywhere, it would be to the nation’s largest cities, more than to the smaller, more rural, cities less connected by business ties or transportation lines to MNYC. To reverse the lyrics of the song “New York, New York,” and with apologies to Frank Sinatra, “if they didn’t bring it here, they didn’t bring it anywhere.”

Of the twenty largest cities, three (New York itself, Brooklyn, and Newark, NJ) are in metro New York, and thus didn’t need New York Rules baseball brought there. Of the remaining 17, I examined the “Nestor” club of each city (the club that was the oldest and most prestigious), and looked at the club leaders for MNYC connections, using as primary sources the wonderful “Base Ball Founders” and “Base Ball Pioneers” books,

supplemented by protoball and by newspaper reports.⁶ Some cities' baseball had a clear MNYC baseball connection. For San Francisco, although baseball in some form was played there as early as 1851, William V. Babcock of the New York Atlantics is credited with bringing the NY Rules game to that city in 1858. For Buffalo, two members of the Brooklyn Excelsiors (James B. Bach and Richard Oliver) get the credit. In St. Louis, ex-Putnam of Brooklyn player Merritt Griswold claimed he brought the New York game to that city.

The initial Detroit club had several New Yorkers on its roster, but they seem to have come from upstate NY, not metro NYC. Similarly, in Cincinnati the game is credited to two Rochester transplants who moved there in 1858. Baltimore baseball has a slightly different origins story. There, a Baltimore grocer traveled to NYC on business in 1858, saw the game, and determined to bring it back to his home town.⁷

But for most of the twenty, the direct MNYC connection is difficult to prove. As we've seen, Philadelphia and Boston had their own, separate, baseball origin. As early as the 1830s Philadelphia had a club (the Olympics) playing a bat-ball game that modern historians label "Philadelphia Town Ball." As early as 1854 Boston had organized clubs playing "Massachusetts Rules Baseball." Neither of these founding clubs had connections to MNYC baseball. Phillies' Olympic club adopted the NY rules in 1860, seemingly without outside prompting. The NY Rules were brought to Boston in 1857 by New Yorker Edward G. Saltzman, who organized the Tri-Mountains to play the "new" game. But the new game only slowly "caught on" in MA.



Edward G. Saltzman, from *The New England Base Ballist*, Aug. 6, 1868

Chicago's Excelsiors had only one NY native on its squad, the wealthy merchant Simeon Farwell, and he'd come to Chicago in 1838 from upstate NY. The Chicago clubs adopted the New York rules on July 21, 1858, seemingly based not on any personal contact, but rather by newspaper reports.⁸ Milwaukee's "Cream City" club boasted prominent New York natives Rufus King, John Livingston Hathaway and John W.

Ledyard, but King had moved from Albany NY to Milwaukee in 1845, and the other two were born upstate and moved to Milwaukee by 1852.

If the marker is for MNYC natives who moved to these cities after 1854 (the year when the NY rules were common, though not formally adopted until 1857-58) and prior to 1861, the teams in most cities can't be shown to have included such members, let alone members with a verifiable connection to one of MNYC's baseball teams. Basically, outside the three MNYC cities, only four (Buffalo, Boston, St. Louis and San Francisco) were provably evangelized by NYC ballplayers. Proof is lacking for the other thirteen.

This conclusion is buttressed by looking at it from the MNYC point of view. The books above mentioned contain biographies of the prominent early ballplayers. And very few of them moved out of MNYC in the 1850s. They numbered only a handful, compared to the hundreds of clubs, and thousands of ballplayers, across the continent. Their diaspora, their presence elsewhere, could not have significantly impacted the game.

That is not to say that ex-NYC ballplayers didn't have an impact in the game's spread. They clearly did have an impact. But newspaper accounts and outsiders visiting NYC also had an impact. And if NYC apostles had little influence on the game's spread, then what did?

Sports historian Tom Melville once stated that "base ball was the first game Americans learned principally by print," that baseball was transmitted by reading "printed regulations."⁹ Author Peter Morris points out that the Detroit Franklins, the city's founding baseball club and the first club west of New York that adopted the NY Rules, adopted them because somebody read about the "new" game in a sporting newspaper. As an early Detroit ballplayer later recalled:

There was an old soldier here in the city named Page... He used to take the *New York Clipper*, and one day he showed me a copy in which there was quite a lengthy description of the new game of base ball.... There was quite a number of us who felt an interest in the game, and we came to the conclusion that the new way must be an improvement over the old. Anyway, we decided to try it. So I wrote to the *Clipper* for a copy of the new rules, and paid \$1 for it. After we got the rules we organized a club—the first in Detroit.¹⁰

This would seem the more usual way the game was spread in those few years.



Detail from Bingham, "County Election"

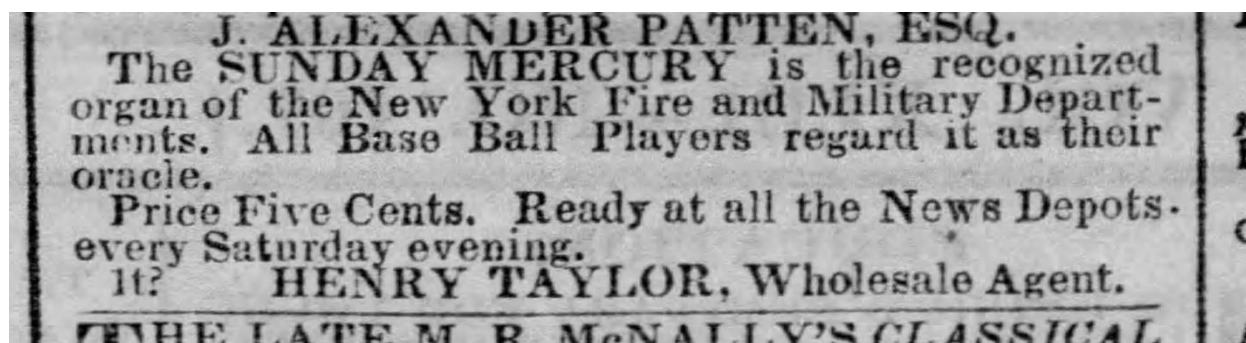
In a previous article written for this newsletter, I showed that baseball was mentioned in the newspapers of every state in the nation prior to 1860, including states that didn't have a baseball club. The *New York Clipper* and *Spirit of the Times*, sports journals with a "national" reach, reported baseball games as early as 1853. The *Spirit* published the then-existing "rules of the game" in 1855.¹¹ These sports publications weren't shy about promoting baseball. Sports historian George Kirsch observes:

From October 1857 to January 1858 *Porter's Spirit* ran a series of fourteen articles on the early history and current practice of baseball, and two years later the *Clipper* followed with a series on organizing a club and playing the game.¹²

These publications did more than merely report on the games. The *New York Clipper*, for one, ran a regular "Answers to Correspondents" section which answered questions from all over the nation. For example, the Aug. 28, 1858 issue offered various people advice on the rules of baseball, what uniform styles were in fashion, and where to purchase baseball equipment—exactly the questions that nascent baseball clubs would wish answered.

New York city was then in the midst of what has been called a "newspaper revolution." The circulation figures for that city's newspapers overwhelm the mind. In 1856, the circulation of the four largest NYC newspapers averaged a combined 419,000, including 20,000 shipped by boat to California in special California editions. The specific sporting press did as well. In 1869 the *Clipper's* circulation was reported to be 10,000, *Spirit of the Times* 20,000. In this era the *Clipper* boasted that it has the largest circulation of any sporting paper in the U.S., an "enormous... immense circulation... extending over the four quarters of the globe.... and "to every city and town throughout the United States." Not to be outdone in boasting, Porter's *Spirit of the Times* also characterized its

circulation as “enormous” and claimed a 50,000 circulation in 1857. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, another newspaper that gave extensive coverage to baseball, claimed in 1856 that it had “the largest circulation of any evening paper in the United States.” The *New York Sunday Mercury* was so baseball-minded that it hired future Hall of Famer Henry Chadwick to cover the sport. By 1861, the *Mercury’s* circulation approached 145,000, with the majority of its subscribers living outside MNYC.¹³



Typical ad promoting the *Mercury*, in the *Baltimore Sun*, Sept. 18, 1858

To add to this, booklets on baseball appeared, giving the history of the game, and instructions on how to play. A *Base Ball Player’s Pocket Companion* had been published in Boston in 1859, and starting in 1860, Beadle’s *Dime Base-Ball Player* began its 21-year run. The annual circulation of Beadle’s was said to approach 50,000 copies—far outstripping any possible movement of GNYC players.

Historian Tom Gilbert has observed that “90 percent of what we know about [baseball in] this period comes from newspapers.”¹⁴ It’s not a stretch to suppose that what most people outside MNYC knew about NY Rules baseball in this period came from newspapers and the print media. This deluge of print inevitably supplanted spread by personal contact.

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1. See John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (2011), 28-29. Cartwright’s inflated status as a founder of the game is the product of a zealous grandson and an altered primary source journal.
 2. John C. Carroll, “Southeast Texas Baseball and the National Game,” *East Texas Historical Journal*, vol. 31 (1993), 59-70. See also George B. Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports* (1989); www.protoball.org/Spread_Theories.
 3. Jeff Kittel in <https://www.thisgameofgames.com/yankee-pioneers-merchants-and-missionaries-cultural-diffusion-and-the-spread-of-baseball.html>
 4. Jesse Ziegler, *Waves of the Gulf* (1937), 183.
 5. The twenty largest cities were (in order) New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Buffalo, Newark,

Louisville, Albany, Washington, San Francisco, Providence, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Detroit, Milwaukee.

This study has an 1860 cut-off date. While baseball rapidly spread to small towns in the aftermath of the Civil War, by 1860 the spread to each state had already occurred.

6. Peter Morris, William J. Ryczek, Jan Finkel, Leonard Levin, and Richard Malatzky, eds., *Baseball Founders: The Clubs, Players and Cities of the Northeast That Established the Game* (2013). Peter Morris, William J. Ryczek, Jan Finkel, Leonard Levin, and Richard Malatzky, eds., *Base Ball Pioneers, 1850-1870: The Clubs and Players Who Spread the Sport Nationwide* (2012).
7. Rochester, NY has a similar origins story.
8. See the *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1858.
9. Cited in Peter Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?: An Informal History of Baseball's Pioneer Era, 1843-1870* (2011), 39.
10. Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun*, 40-41.
11. Bruce Allardice, "Data on the Coverage of Base Ball in Early Newspapers," *SABR Origins of Baseball Committee Newsletter*, Dec. 2023. William Ryczek, *Baseball's First Inning* (2009), 163-164.
12. Kirsch, op cit, 62.
13. J. L. Crouthamel, "The Newspaper Revolution in New York 1830-1860," *New York History*, vol. 45 (1964), 91-113. *Rowell's American Newspaper Directory, 1869*; *New York Clipper*, April 11, May 16, Dec. 26, 1857, March 31, 1860; Porter's *Spirit of the Times*, July 13, Aug. 23, 1857; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 24, 1856; *Our Game blog*, Feb. 20, 2017; William T. Coggeshall, *The Newspaper Record* (1856); William Style (ed.), *Writing and Fighting the Civil War: Soldier Correspondence to the New York Sunday Mercury* (2000), 10. It should be noted that newspapers routinely exaggerated their circulation (while avoiding giving actual numbers), in order to attract advertisements. David Block's *Baseball Before We Knew It* (2005), 225-228, has a concise summary of the different sporting journals. See also John Thorn's *Our Game* blog, Oct. 20, 2011.
14. Thomas Gilbert, *How Baseball Happened: Outrageous Lies Exposed, The Truth Revealed* (2020), 35.

Baseball in American Culture: 1867- Contemporary Views

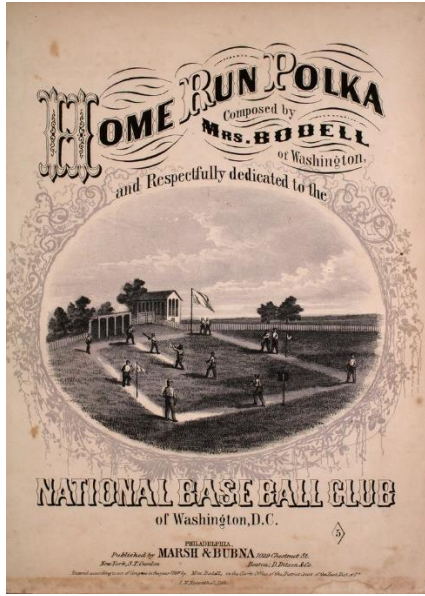
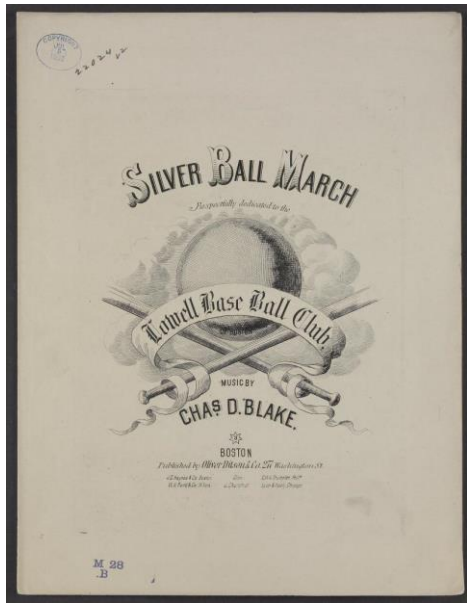
By Bob Tholkes

"That game base ball,

Played thro'-out our country's lines:
Enjoyed by all,
Both great and small,
'Tis the panic of the times."¹

Saluted in the "Carrier's Address", a multiverse New Year's summary of national trends as 1867 began, the sentiment amounted to a left-handed compliment: "panic" recalled to readers the periodic financial depressions which rocked the American economy in the 19th century, but also reflected the sport's widespread impact. In 1867 all 37 states and eight (of 12) territories were the sites of baseball clubs or games under National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) rules.²

Geographic spread was matched by new incursions into national life. "Monomaniacs", wrote an anonymous contributor to *The Ball Players Chronicle*, "used (base ball's) technical expressions during their prayers, at the table, and in business transactions."³ Widely circulated examples of slang which were becoming "acclimated" were 'daisy-cutter', 'muffin', and 'sky-scraper'.⁴ A stream of new songs, mostly dedicated to particular clubs, were composed and published for the sale of sheet music: "The Silver Ball March" (Lowell Base Ball Club of Boston); "Catch It On The Fly" (Excelsior Base Ball Club of Chicago); "The Home Run Gallop" (Atlantic Base Ball Club of Chicago); "Home Run Polka" (National Base Ball Club of Washington, D. C.); and "Athletic Gallop" (Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia). Baseball began to be invited to the ball: accounts of masquerade balls in New York State and Pennsylvania noted revelers in baseball uniforms. Its acceptance at schools increased: Colleges noted baseball clubs in school directories and dedicated baseball fields; games were featured at commencement exercises at McKendree College (Lebanon, IL) and Kentucky Military Institute in Frankfort. It was compared to the Fourth of July as a national institution.⁵ Baseball was in other ways considered evidence of a national trend toward the recognition of the importance of "physical culture", as the "surest road to mental superiority and intellectual greatness."⁶



Library of Congress

The sport made its first foray into national politics when in August the Mutual Club of New York City, playing in Washington, D. C., visited the White House, and announced that President Andrew Johnson had been voted an honorary member of the club. The President remarked that he accepted with pleasure and praised the sport as a “moral recreation”. Later he was an “interested spectator” at the Mutuals’ game.⁷ With the President embroiled in the controversies that would result in his impeachment in February 1868, his political opponents took the opportunity to wax sarcastic. Building on the frequent accusation against him of drunkenness, the *Chicago Republican*, in a widely reprinted comment, suggested that “in view of his capacity for holding beverages, that he be made a pitcher.”⁸

Base ball’s geographic explosion reverberated at the fairs held in every corner of the nation in the late summer and fall, primarily county-wide but including some state fairs. Baseball had been played at fairs previously, but the rapid expansion of the sport in 1867 caused a similar expansion in the number of fair organizers planning a baseball attraction. As an editorial explained, “it will doubtless draw thousands to watch the contest for the championship... Three-fourths of the persons who visit the Fair will do so for the amusement and relaxation as much as anything else. It is, therefore, very wise for the Superintendent to introduce amusements.”⁹ Fairs with such an ambition found it necessary to offer cash prizes and trophies. The champion of the competition at the Rock Island, Illinois, County Fair walked away with a \$200 silver belt, while the winner at the Rock County, Wisconsin, Fair pocketed \$100.00, and the runner-up \$50.00. The Alton, Illinois *Telegraph*, downriver from the silver-belt providers of Rock Island, harrumphed that such evils would cause fairs “to be shunned by all well-disposed

persons, as they would the pestilence.”¹⁰ As with fairs, baseball matches were scheduled by festivals, excursions, and fundraisers of all types: Fast Day, May Day, and the Fourth of July all saw festival games, and for-profit, church, company, and miscellaneous association excursions, temperance groups among them, held games. A firemen’s gathering, it was reported, would include “the inevitable base ball game.”¹¹ Hopefully these entertainments were as laid back and fun as the game at the anniversary excursion of the 17th Maine Volunteer Regiment:

“After protracted play it was discovered that on ‘even innings’ there was a tie, and so it was agreed to indefinitely postpone the game and leave victory to tremble in the balance till she got tired. The ball players had.”¹²

Fundraisers auctioned baseball equipment and included votes to select a club to receive equipment. Juvenile concerts featured baseball songs and skits.

*“Bethany is determined to be up with the rest of the cities, such as New York, Washington, and Chicago, and so we have commenced playing base ball.”*¹³ Civic pride continued to stimulate local boosters to encourage their young men to form ball clubs, which presumably would provide reflected glory to the town’s current residents and a positive image to prospective newcomers. The frontier version is cited in a New Mexico paper’s remark in an intrasquad match report that “We don’t intend to be behind our neighbors of Colorado in anything.”¹⁴ If nothing else, a club provided a local group needing local support for such matters as finding a place to play, and likely in return to cooperate in fundraising efforts by playing benefit games for worthy causes, both national in scope—funds for assisting war veterans, disaster relief like yellow fever and war recovery in the South—and in aid of other local groups.

Civic rivalry reached a notable head after Chicago baseball’s discomfiture at the hands of the touring Nationals of Washington in July. The tourists’ tour of the west (as far as St. Louis) concluded with a three-game stint in Chicago. They had thoroughly lambasted every western club they played. A combination of overconfidence, fatigue, and rainy conditions then resulted in a stunning loss to the first club they encountered in Chicago, the Forest Citys of Rockford, Illinois, who had previously lost a match with the Chicago champions, the Excelsior. Stung, the Nationals then embarrassed the Excelsior, who Chicagoans boasted were also the champions of the west, and the other top Chicago club, the Atlantic. Newspapers in western rivals Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis had a field day. The ball club in Pecatonica, Illinois, which in 1866 had received a brass horn, emblematic of its distinction in having endured the worst loss in a tournament game, forwarded the booby prize to Chicago.¹⁵

Baseball’s wide acceptance may perhaps be indicated by the reaction in the press to a report that the Mercantile Library Association of Portland, Maine, would debate the immoral tendencies of baseball. The *Boston Herald*, among other papers, noted

gleefully that defenders of the sport had “laid their opponents out”.¹⁶ This was, however, Boston, where the recent unveiling in the Public Garden of a “colossal” bronze statue entitled the “Fly-Catch” depicting a player attempting that “skilful [sic] and difficult feat” was saluted, perhaps tongue in cheek, as exemplifying the “artistic taste of the citizens of Boston.”¹⁷

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A MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I am glad to notice that the artistic taste of the citizens of Boston has finally found expression in embodying in imperishable bronze our national game of base ball, as exhibited in the beautiful statue of the “Fly-Catch,” recently erected in the Public Garden. The figure is of colossal size, and represents the subject in the attitude of performing, with extended arm and open fingers, that skilful and difficult feat in this well-known game, called the fly-catch, in which the player endeavors to catch the swiftly moving ball ere it falls to earth.

SUBURBAN.

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Potpourri

Early Ads for Baseball Equipment


From Peck's 1868 Sports Equipment Catalog

THE NEW YORK CITY
BASE BALL EMPORIUM
And Manufacturing Company.

ILLUSTRATED AND DESCRIPTIVE
PRICE LIST OF
BASE BALL, CRICKET, ARCHERY,
AND

Sporting Goods in General.

15-18-2



Yours Respectfully
Andrew Peck

PECK & SNYDER,
105 Nassau Street, New York.

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1868, by Peck & Snyder, in Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

BASE BALLS.

Having made arrangements with Messrs. H. Harwood & Sons and John Van Horn to furnish their brands of Base Balls in connection with those of our own manufacture, we now offer a list of *twenty-two* varieties. Particular attention is called to our Bounding Rock (or endless seam) ball, which was used and endorsed by all the leading clubs throughout the country the past season. Its merits are *Elasticity, Endless-seam,* (which will stand the severest batting without ripping,) and beauty of finish. Also, we have been appointed special agents for the sale of the celebrated John Van Horn Regulation Base Ball, which we supply to dealers and clubs at his lowest price.

The following are fac-simile of stamps on our brands of regulation Base Balls.

PECK & SNYDER, PECK & SNYDER,
Bounding Rock. CONVENTION.
PECK & SNYDER, PECK & SNYDER,
DIAMOND. PRACTICE.

STAMPED

5 oz. & S. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$. small regulation

— to —


5 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. & S. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$. full regulation

Base Balls Re-covered, 50c. & 75c. each.

Parties sending Balls to be re-covered are expected to pay all express charges.

ENGLISH IMPORTED FOOT BALLS.


These foot balls are extensively used in England, and are warranted to stand as much kicking as a dozen of any other description. They are made of vulcanized India Rubber bladders, warranted to stand any climate, and leather cases of the best material and workmanship.



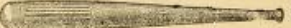
Sizes 18 to 23 inches in circumference; price \$3 to 6

BASE BALL BATS.

Our assortment is larger than that of any other house in the business, and we take special care to have all our bats made of the best timber there is in the market, also to have them well seasoned and made after the best patterns suggested to us by experienced players. We make a speciality of Patent Bats; also, of English willow, which we import only for our own trade.

No.  25.

Searle's Patent Plaited Bat..... Each. \$1 50

No.  26.

No. 26 Hill's Patent Spring Bat.....	\$1 00 and \$1 25
No. 27 Hill & Moore's Patent Plaited Bat.....	75 " 1 00
" 28 English Willow (Regulation).....	1 00 " 1 25
" 29 Cotton Wood ".....	40 " 50
" 30 Ash ".....	40 " 50
" 31 Bam " No. 1 ".....	40
" 32 " " No. 2 ".....	35
" 33 Extra Polished ".....	1 00
" 34 Patent Spring Handle Bat.....	2 50
Sycamore Regulation Bats.....	25 " 35
	40 " 50

PRIZE BATS.

" 36 Bird's Eye Maple, Polished.....	Each. \$3 00
" 37 Black Walnut ".....	3 00
" 38 Rose Wood, XX, ".....	5 00
" 39 Elephant Bats; these bats are as well made and proportioned as the best Regulation and are used as a sign for dealers, size 5 feet long	6 00
German Silver Bands, 2 inches wide, for Prize Bats; Mountings Plain.....	3 00
Solid Silver Bands, 2 inches wide, for Prize Bats.....	4 50
" " Handle Caps, Plain.....	\$1 50 to 3 00
German Silver " ".....	1 00 to 1 50

Engraving on Prize Bats extra according to number and style of workmanship required.

Copyrighted Base Ball Score Books,

With new and improved methods of scoring as now used by all first class Clubs; are superior and cheaper than any others yet published.

Peck & Snyder's Pocket Score Book, Pamphlet, 7 games....	10c
" " " " " Cloth 21 ".....	25c
" " " " " " 42 ".....	50c
" " " " " " Bds 53 ".....	75c

The Practice Base Ball Score Book.

This book is more for the use of Junior Clubs, or for practice games for Senior Clubs; it is a trifle smaller than the large field books, containing space for all the particular points in the game.

Bound in cloth, 60 games..... \$1 75

The New Association Field Score Books.
By HENRY CHADWICK.

Association, 30 Game Boards.....	\$2 00
" 60 " ".....	3 00
" 90 " ".....	4 00
" 120 " ".....	4 75
" 30 " Cloth.....	2 50
" 60 " ".....	3 25
" 90 " ".....	4 25
" 120 " ".....	5 00
" Score Sheets.....	6

Field Score Books made to order, any number of games, or any style of binding required.

Don't we wish we could purchase bats for \$1 or less?

1859 Newspaper Claims Baseball "Not Popular"

Harpers Weekly, Oct. 15, 1859:

"Whether baseball be a better or a worse game than cricket we do not now propose to inquire; but is it really worth while inquiring whether the former is or is not as popular among us as is commonly reported in the newspapers?"

In New York, it is well known, there are several base-ball clubs which play periodically. The same thing is true of Boston, Philadelphi, and perhaps one or two other cities. But is base-ball so popular that it is a regular and well-understood diversion in most of the counties in most of the states of the Union? Do young men naturally learn base-ball in Massachusetts, in Pennsylvania, in Wisconsin, in Louisiana? Could a base-ball match be got up in every town of ten thousand inhabitants throughout the country? For our part, we regret to say that we doubt very much whether base-ball be a popular game at all in the interior, or in any part of the country except in a few great cities."

Then, as now, newspapers get things wrong. It can now be shown that by October 1859 baseball clubs existed, and/or games been played, in 25 of the 33 states, and in all twenty of the nation's largest cities. Four of the remaining eight (mostly southern) states had baseball the following year. Baseball had penetrated beyond the "big cities" to such smaller locales as Nininger, MN; Grand Rapids, MI; Davenport, IA; and many other towns of what the New York-based *Harpers* sneeringly refers to as the "interior."

Latest Protoball Additions

Total numbers—As of Feb. 11, 2024, the Protoball **Pre-Pro (pre-1871) Database** contained 12,413 clubs and 4,910 ballgames, with a further 4,800 games in the searchable Tholkes RIM file but only partially entered into the Pre-Pro database. Since the last newsletter, 20 clubs and 839 ballgames have been added.

The ongoing project to enter into Protoball's "Games" the Tholkes RIM games 1847-65, is now complete through 1862.

Games Entries. When Protoball started, 10 years ago, the site boasted 1500 club and game entries, almost all New York entries. Today, that total exceeds 17,000 entries, covering all 50 states and 200+ countries.

Of the U.S. entries, about 12% of the clubs are located in what is now Metropolitan New York. About 60% of the games entered are Metro NYC games

For the so-called "**predecessor**" games such as townball and cricket, there are 661 U.S. entries. The "**Glossary of Games**" includes 328 predecessor and derivative bat-ball games. The "**Chronology**" has 2,068 entries.

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

Finds of the Month

Baseball on ice. A new "first baseball game" for the Yukon was played near Herschel Island, on the Arctic Ocean, in 1889 by sailors of whaling ships stranded in the ice. The whalers played against the crew of a rescuing US Revenue cutter, with a prize of

tobacco for the winning team. The game was called, tied, when the ice began to melt and crack, and the baseball disappeared into the sea. Visit https://protoball.org/Arctics_v_Crew_of_the_Thetis_in_Herschel_Island_in_1889

Research Requests

ProtoPix: We're slowly adding photos and images of early baseball to the new "ProtoPix" section of Protoball--130 so far. It is hoped to eventually make this a one-stop source of images of early baseball. Submissions would be welcomed.

The magazine *America's Civil War* is seeking articles related to baseball play during that war (1861-65). Anyone interested in writing an article can contact Richard Holloway at noblepelican@gmail.com.



BULLETIN BOARD

The 19th Century Baseball Committee Speakers Series has the following presentations lined up for online viewing:

March 12: Paul Browne on "Hustling Dan O'Leary"

April 9: Elena Dugan on "In Spite of His Color, He is Captain of the Baseball Nine This Year"

May 14: Vincent Ciaramella on "Death by Drinking Seawater: The Short and Tragic Life and Career of Tom O'Brien"

Bruce Allardice has finished the SABR Biography of William E. White, the first African-American Major League Baseball Player.

John Thorn's always excellent *Our Games* blog has a Jan. 2nd article on early baseball patents, including an early board game (NOT Strat-o-matic's!) and a "baseball bat on steroids." See <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/base-ball-patents-125cb516faad>

The **Frederick Ivor Campbell 2024 Conference** (the "Fred," April 19-20th at Cooperstown) will feature a panel discussion on "How Important Were the Knickerbockers?" The panelists will be "origins" gurus **Tom Gilbert**, **Bob Tholkes**, and **Bruce Allardice**, with **Bill Ryczek** as moderator. Bruce will also give a presentation on "MLB Goes South: the 1884 Richmond Virginias."

SABR 52 is returning to Minneapolis this August 7-11. More on this later,

This Week in SABR, Jan. 26th, has a link to an excellent article on Ice Baseball, from the first recorded game of baseball played on ice (1860). See <https://nwbaseballhistory.substack.com/p/ice-ice-baseball-a-delightful-history>

The journal *Illinois History* reviewed Bob Sampson's book on early Illinois baseball, *Ballists, Dead Beats and Muffins*, which this newsletter reviewed in the May 2023 issue.

The **19th Century Baseball Committee's** Winter 2024 newsletter contained a great article by Woody Eckard, titled "The Transition to Organized Professional Baseball, 1869-1872." This committee is also sponsoring a book club discussion of books that include pre-1871, Origins Era, baseball. Visit file:///C:/Users/16302/Desktop/SABR-Nineteenth_Century_Cmte-2024-01%20(1).pdf



"TOWN BALL" WITH FIVE "PLACES."

From the *Savannah Morning News*, Nov. 23, 1902