

Baseball Origins Newsletter

Volume One, Number 4

December 2021

In this issue:

Notes on the History and Evolution of Stoolball ...Page 2

Spread of Baseball thru 1870 ...Page 7

Interview with Richard Hershberger...Page 10

Brooklyn Rules! ...Page 14

Early Women's Baseball ...15

Potpourri ...Page 17

Latest Protoball Additions ...Page 21

Find of the Month ...Page 22

Research Requests ...Page 23

Bulletin Board ...Page 23

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.

Notes on the History and Evolution of Stoolball

By David Block

The documented history of stoolball in Britain dates back nearly 600 years, and the game is often cited as a predecessor to both cricket and baseball. Today it enjoys ongoing popularity as an organized team sport in Sussex and other counties in the south of England. Yet many gaps remain in our understanding of stoolball's history and development. What follows is a short summation of stoolball's historical eras, as I perceive them, along with a few additional notes and comments. I realize this is nerdy brew even for the most ardent consumers of this newsletter, given that stoolball's influence on baseball's origins is murky at best, so abstainers are forgiven. For a deeper dive into stoolball's history, especially its ancient/romantic era, please see my 2005 book *Baseball before We Knew It*. I also recommend English historian Andrew Lusted's two pamphlets, *Girls Just Wanted to Have Fun*, and *The Glynde Butterflies Stoolball Team, 1866-1887*.



Stoolball in 1767, from wikipedia

First off, What is “Stoolball?”

Descriptions of stool-ball prior to 1867 exist, but give few details. (For 1867 and subsequent rules, see below)

1. In the 1660s, Francis Willughby described a game called stoolball that had similarities to trap-ball (see Protoball.org for trap-ball), but with the batter fungoing the ball rather than using a trap.
2. The poem “Stool-ball, or the Easter Diversion” in 1733 elaborately described a contest played in Wales that included use of a bat, pitching, but no base-running.
3. The stoolball poem in 1744’s “A Little Pretty Pocket-book” implies baserunning with its phrase “swift round his course the gamester flies.” But no bat.
4. Joseph Strutt in 1801 described two forms of stoolball, one a simple two-person game with no baserunning, and the second a multiple base game with multiple base-runners. All subsequent descriptions of stoolball appearing in the 19th century prior to 1867 were modeled on Strutt’s.

History of Stoolball

The history of stoolball can be divided roughly into two phases, pre-modern and modern, with the 1860s forming the dividing line between the two. The pre-modern period itself can be seen as comprised of two eras, the ancient/romantic and the early competitive.

Ancient/Romantic Era: This spans stoolball’s history from its earliest recorded presence in the 15th century through the early decades of the 18th century. This era is characterized by hundreds of references to stoolball in British literature and poetry. These references relate primarily to the game’s role in British popular culture, and secondarily to controversies over its legal standing (stoolball play was permitted, even on Sundays, by Anglican monarchs of the 1600s, an attitude that was bitterly opposed by Puritan authorities). Almost universally, the references to stoolball during these centuries omit particulars about how it was played. Instead, writers of the era, both literally and metaphorically, celebrated the game’s role in springtime courtship rituals, portraying stoolball as an activity where young men and young women could mingle freely, and thus provide opportunities for sexual engagement and romance. If any players during this era embraced the game as a means of serious athletic competition, no record of such activity survives. (Nor is there any evidence to support the venerable legend that stoolball originated when milkmaids laid down their stools to use as wickets for ball play).

Early Competitive Era: This period roughly spans the years 1740 to 1860. It marks the almost simultaneous decline of stoolball as a romantic emblem in British literature and the emergence of a game with the identical name as a competitive sport in the southern England county of Sussex. The earliest sign of the latter is a 1747 Sussex newspaper report mentioning a stoolball match played by maidens in the village of Warbleton.

Similar reports appeared occasionally in the British press toward the end of the 18th century and through the first six decades of the 19th. In nearly all of these reports, groups of women or girls in various Sussex locales formed teams to compete against each other, often at the same locale where male friends and family were playing cricket. There are no surviving rules or descriptions to inform us of how Sussex women and girls played stoolball during those years.



Stoolball at Horsham park, 1878

Modern Period: In the 1860s, the first organized stoolball clubs formed in Sussex, and in 1867, William de St Croix, a local vicar in the town of Glynde and the father of several players on the local town team, codified and published the first known set of standardized rules. These rules closely paralleled those of cricket, with several significant exceptions. Of note, a one-handed paddle was substituted for the heavy cricket bat, bowlers served balls underhanded and, instead of wickets, two wooden targets, each a foot square, were positioned atop stakes to serve as goals. Competitions between clubs of women and girls representing various Sussex villages proceeded until the end of the century. The game was revived again periodically in the 20th century, with clubs and associations coming in and out of existence over the decades. The current umbrella organization for the sport, the National Stoolball Association, was founded in 1979 and supervises numerous clubs in Sussex and surrounding counties. It changed its name to Stoolball England in 2010.



Modern Stoolball (from thisgirlcan.co.uk)

Comments/Opinions

1. Beginning in the 18th century and continuing into the 19th, several British newspaper articles mentioned matches of a game called “battle-board.” All of these involved female players from the county of Kent that borders Sussex to the east. In all likelihood battle-board was simply a local Kentish designation for stoolball. A possibly related term—bittle-battle—has been cited on occasion as another alternate name for stoolball. Baseball historian Robert W. Henderson and others have alleged the word battle-battle appeared in the Domesday book. This latter claim is unfounded, although there is at least one, verified use of the term bittle-battle, this being when a local newspaper in the Sussex town of Seaford reported on a game of that name in 1864.
2. Modern stoolball is played in a manner very similar to cricket. Its rules, as first codified in 1867, are plainly modeled after those of the more heralded sport. It may not be a coincidence that reports of women playing cricket in England first appeared in the 1740s, the same decade as the first known competitive stoolball match. And as they did in that stoolball contest, women from Sussex comprised the opposing sides in at least one of the cricket matches.
3. Then again, there is no hard evidence that stoolball assumed its cricket-like essence as early as the 1740s. It is possible that when women in Sussex first began playing competitively they were practicing an earlier form of the game and only gravitated to the cricket model at some later date. It is equally uncertain when adoption of the one-handed racket and elevated targets came into use.

Sussex historian Andrew Lusted maintains that women in his county had been playing this “modern” version of the game for at least several decades before Reverend de St Croix formalized its rules in 1867.

Since the end of the antique/romantic era of stoolball, the game appears to have been played predominantly by females, although there are ample examples of men and boys playing it on mixed teams. There is also one anomalous example of two teams of men facing off at stoolball in the town of Sittingbourne in Kent in the year 1785, as reported by a local newspaper.

4. One additional dichotomy between the ancient/romantic era of stoolball versus the competitive and modern periods is where the game was played. During the three centuries prior to the 1740s, stoolball clearly enjoyed popularity throughout Britain. This is suggested by the hundreds of references to the game that appeared in literature, polemics and poetry, including in works written by celebrated authors from Shakespeare to Sir Walter Scott (Scott, of course, wrote in the 19th century, but his reference to stoolball appeared in his novel *Ivanhoe* which was set in the 12th century). By contrast, from 1747 onward when newspapers reported on actual stoolball matches, nearly all were played in Sussex, with isolated examples from Surrey and Kent (also in southeast England).
5. Stoolball’s distinction as predecessor game to cricket and baseball is based solely upon presumption, not actual proof. Yet, historian Joseph Strutt offered one intriguing description of stoolball suggestive of a possible relationship to baseball. In his iconic work *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, first published in 1801, Strutt presented the following as one of his two descriptions of stoolball:

“A certain number of stools are set up in a circular form, and at a distance from each other, and every one of them is occupied by a single player; when the ball is struck, which is done as before with the hand, they are every one of them obliged to alter his situation, running in succession from stool to stool, and if he who threw the ball can regain it in time to strike any one of the players, before he reaches the stool to which he is running, he takes his place, and the person touched must throw the ball, until he can in like manner return to the circle.” If you can overlook such minor discrepancies as the absence of a bat, the employment of soaking, and the order of play after a baserunner has been retired, then perhaps you can just discern, as I do, a resemblance to a type of baseball where play begins with the bases already loaded. No? Well, eyes of the beholder, and all that.

6. One other minor baseball comparison came to mind when I read a 1923 letter to the editor of a Sussex newspaper that was brought to my attention by Sussex historian Andrew Lusted. The correspondent was discussing a letter that he himself had received from a veteran stoolball player who recounted a controversy about stoolball's rules from the late 19th century. It seems that, at the time, players from East Sussex and West Sussex were in the midst of a spirited disagreement, with the former wanting, among other things, to shorten the bowling crease so that the bowler would be positioned mid-wicket. The West Sussex advocates derided this proposal, charging that their counterparts in East Sussex were simply unable to bowl wicket to wicket, and that the rule change was being offered "to cover their incapacity." While the two sides eventually reached a compromise, the dispute reminded me of a letter that had appeared in Porter's *Spirit of the Times* in December, 1856. In that one, an advocate for the Massachusetts game boasted about their use of fast "throwing," and averred that the type of soft, underhand pitching as practiced in the New York game is never utilized in New England "except by the most juvenile players." Baseball, too, worked out these differences, with the New York game becoming the standard, but with aspects of Massachusetts game, such as fast overhand pitching and the fly rule, eventually incorporated.

Baseball's Geographic Spread Through 1870— By the Numbers

By Bruce Allardice

One way to statistically measure the spread of baseball is by counting the number of clubs formed in each city (or each state—a future article will do a state-by-state analysis) prior to the 1871 start of professional baseball leagues.

The Protoball database (www.protoball.org) of "pre-professional" clubs, with almost 10,000 club entries, is the best single source for data on these clubs. While it will never be 100% complete, it is robust enough for this kind of analysis.

Obviously, while the number of clubs is a pretty good proxy for the interest in baseball in a locality, it is not a perfect measure. Clubs frequently changed their names and the "same" club may be listed two or more times under these names. How many clubs we have found in each city depends on the newspaper coverage for that city, and whether a thorough search has been made to try and list all the clubs in that city through 1870.

With all these caveats, I performed a Protoball search in Dec, 2021, and a few patterns emerged:

- 1) Given sufficient local newspaper coverage, modern research can find about one pre-1871 club for every 1,500 residents of an average major city.
- 2) The cities where baseball first was played have more clubs per capita. Which should come as no surprise. See the three NJ cities especially.
- 3) In clubs per thousand residents, Chicago stands out among the “later” cities (cities outside New York, where baseball started later), due in large measure to the local newspaper’s obsessive coverage of amateur baseball.
- 4) In another article in this newsletter I analyze how by 1857 Brooklyn overtook NYC as baseball’s center. The club data here, which goes through 1870, confirms that conclusion, with Brooklyn having twice the clubs per capita that NYC had.
- 5) Given the above patterns, the clubs per thousand in these big cities are pretty comparable from one city to the next.
- 6) The Southern cities (Richmond, Memphis, New Orleans, Charleston, Mobile) have about the same percentage of clubs to population as the Midwest cities. Which suggests a uniform pre-1871 growth of baseball outside the Northeast.
- 7) The city boundaries were changing during this time, and do not always correspond to modern boundaries. For example, Boston annexed Roxbury in 1868 and Dorchester in 1870, but the Boston club numbers in Protoball don’t reflect Roxbury or Dorchester clubs. The Roxbury and Dorchester club numbers are included in the table below. These constantly shifting city boundaries should be taken into account when analyzing the numbers.
- 8) The numbers indicate which cities seem to have fewer clubs per thousand and where further research on early baseball should be focused.

40 biggest US cities, 1870, with number of pre-1871 clubs (per Protoball, as of 12-21-2021) and clubs per population

City	Population (in thousands)	Clubs	Population Per Club	Year of First Baseball
New York City ¹	942	216	4,360	1831/45
Philadelphia	674	180	3,700	1858
Brooklyn ²	396	226	1,700	1845
St. Louis	310	134	2,300	1859
Chicago	298	280	1,070	1856

Baltimore	267	99	2,700	1858
Boston ³	250	90	2,800	1853
Cincinnati	216	122	1,800	1858
New Orleans	191	136	1,400	1859
San Francisco	149	52	2,900	1858
Buffalo	117	82	1,400	1856
Washington DC	109	59	1,850	1859
Newark NJ	105	143	750	1855
Louisville	100	39	2,600	1858
Cleveland	92	50	1,800	1858
Pittsburgh	86	53	1,600	1860
Jersey City NJ	82	147	550	1855
Detroit	79	48	1,700	1859
Milwaukee	71	30	2,400	1859
Albany NY	69	62	1,100	1856
Providence	69	60	1,150	1857
Rochester	62	28	2,300	1858
Allegheny ⁴	53	12	4,400	1860
Richmond	51	45	1,100	1866
New Haven	50	53	900	1857
Charleston SC	49	49	1,000	1866
Indianapolis	48	39	1,200	1865
Troy ⁵	46	70	660	1859
Syracuse	43	27	1,600	1858
Worcester	41	14	3,150	1858
Lowell	40	29	1,400	1857
Memphis	40	30	1,300	1860
Cambridge	39	31	1,300	1857
Hartford	37	33	1,100	1860
Scranton	35	15	2,300	1865
Reading	33	24	1,400	1865
Paterson NJ	33	44	750	1857
Kansas City	32	10	3,200	1866
Mobile	32	17	1,900	1867
Toledo	31	10	3,100	1860

¹ At this time New York City only included Manhattan Island.

² At this time Brooklyn and New York City were separate cities. Totals are for the Borough of Brooklyn.

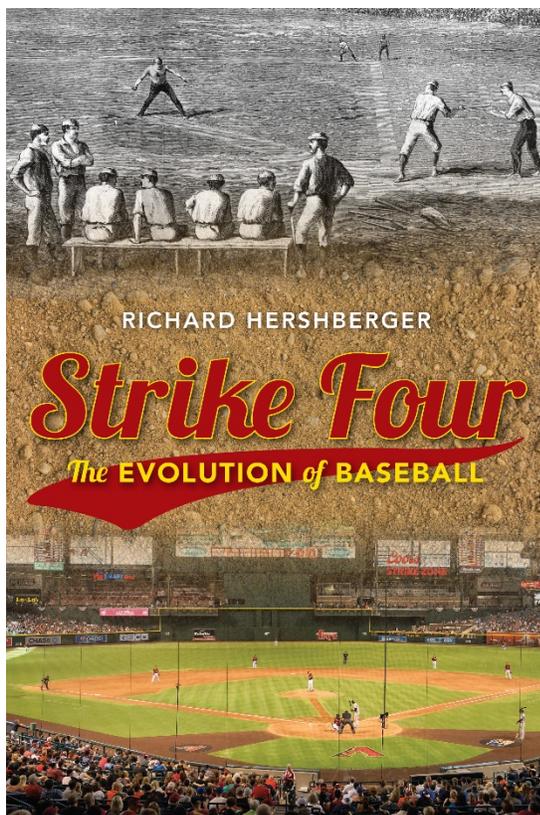
³ Includes clubs for Roxbury and Dorchester, annexed by Boston in 1868 and 1870.

⁴ Pittsburgh and Allegheny were really one city (they combined in 1903). The combined city had 139,000 residents and 60 clubs, with 1 club to every 2,300 residents.

⁵ Troy's numbers don't include West Troy (now, Watervliet) which had 10,693 residents in 1870, or Green Island.

Protoball Interview with Richard Hershberger

Note: Richard Hershberger is the author of Strike Four: The Evolution of Baseball (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019). A frequent (and exacting) contributor to SABR's 19CCB list-serve, he is also one of Protoball's leading data donors, supplying hundreds of summaries of early base ball clubs to the PrePro data base, and submitting his collection of 19C news clips, including over 2000 clips from the Origins Era, to Protoball's News Clips collection -- and it has even more clips for later 19C years.



Protoball: *Many of us Origins Sleuthlings wandered into the field in a fog of idle curiosity. You seem to have arrived with a pre-fabricated mission of reading primary baseball material, year-by-year. What do you now see as the strengths and weaknesses of that approach?*

My entry was nothing so systematic. When I first became interested in early baseball I focused on the late 1870s and early 1880s. I was fascinated by the interregnum—the period when there was no major league ball in either New York City or Philadelphia. I was not especially interested on baseball’s origins until David Block’s book, *Baseball Before We Knew It* [2005] came out. With that I was hooked. So now you know who to blame.

I also fell by accident into my program of systematic reading. If you look at the better books on early baseball written in the late 20th century you can tell that there were a handful of major baseball newspapers from the 1850s, with the various iterations of *Spirit of the Times* and the [New York] *Clipper* frequently cited. There were also mentions of the New York *Sunday Mercury*, but no citations from it. It clearly was a major paper, but known only by references in other papers. It turned out that the *Sunday Mercury* was not lost. Copies are extant for 1853 onward, except for 1856 and 1857 (topping my wish list). The problem was that they were scattered, difficult and inconvenient to locate, so no one had done this. Enter Bob Tholkes. He took up the project to track down and scan everything up through the Civil War—the *Sunday Mercury* and the others as well. You will get to blame Bob as well.

At this point I realized that it is entirely doable to read essentially all the newspaper coverage through the end of the Civil War. It isn’t all that much. You could do it in your spare time over a month or so. So I did, taking lots of notes in electronic form. Then I wasn’t bright enough to know to stop. With the postwar baseball boom the newspaper coverage soon becomes too much to read literally everything. I was forced to be selective. In practice this means reading the sporting weeklies and a selection of dailies from the major cities. I have been working my way forward, currently up to 1892.

The dual strengths of this approach are that it brings out what they thought was important at the time, and reveals nuggets that are buried in larger items.

For example, Erastus Wiman’s lawsuit against the AA [American Association] in late 1885 arguably is one of the most important legal cases in the history of baseball, or even sports in general. It forced the owners to think in terms of a league franchise as a property right with value. It took them a while to work through the implications, but in the end this concept is absolutely foundational to professional team sports. Yet this case is nearly entirely forgotten today. There are entirely understandable reasons for this. Its importance is not as legal precedent, so it flies under the radar of legal historians. Similarly for the historians of the business of baseball, since the idea that a franchise is a property right seems so obvious as not to require explanation. But at the

time they thought it was important and had good reasons to think it. These reasons are readily apparent in a systematic read-through, while easily overlooked in a more targeted research strategy.

As for buried nuggets, my history of the evolution of the rules would have been impossible with a targeted strategy. A rule is changed because there is a problem to be solved. These problems turn up in day-to-day game play. Sometimes there is a year-end wrap-up discussion of problems and proposals to solve them, but you can't count on this. Even when these discussions are printed, the context can be obscure. There is no substitute for the systematic, plodding approach. As a single example, the infield fly rule is traditionally dated to either 1893 (or 1890 for the Players' League). It turns out in fact to date from the 1870s. The 1893 rule was the culmination of a twenty-year-long discussion, both what the rule should be and how to express it. The previous twenty years were overlooked by modern researchers because the language of the rule was obscure—even at the time, which is why they changed it. But read game accounts and we can find infield fly situations and discussions of how the umpire should interpret the rules.

The weaknesses to this approach are that it is massively time consuming and easy to get bogged down in minutiae. Indeed, it is pretty much necessary to get bogged down in minutiae. It often is not obvious what will be important, so better to take more notes than fewer. I only recommend it for someone with lots of spare time and mental energy to devote to it. But I absolutely wish someone would. I have made just the first pass through the material. There certainly are nuggets that I overlooked.

Protoball: *The word is that daytimes you have worked as para-legal. Is it a mere coincidence that your first book, the clever and informative Strike Four, was about the evolution of what were once called the "Laws of Base Ball?" Did the book generally turn out the way you thought it would?*

A lawyer once told me that I think like a lawyer. I responded that I knew she meant it as a compliment, so I would take it that way. But seriously, a lot of what "thinking like a lawyer" really means is simply keeping straight in your mind what it is you are arguing. This is no different from good scholarship. Decades back I considered becoming an academic but decided against it. I don't regret that decision. I don't have to grade undergraduate term papers, nor attend department meetings and sit on committees. I call that a win. But I have the academic itch. Writing about early baseball is how I scratch it. I eventually fell backwards into the legal field, where I found my skill set worked well. So while my hobby and professional interests are not unrelated, the relationship is indirect.

The impetus for the book was purely historical interest. I see the purpose of the study of history to be answering the question "How did we get here?" This is why 19th century baseball fascinates me. They had to figure everything out. Once you get to the 20th century most of the foundational parts of baseball as an institution were understood. The implications still have to play out, but it is a different discussion. This process of figuring it out worked in various ways. As cultural history, they had to through the idea of forming clubs to play a game: was this a reasonable, or even commendable, thing for grown men to do? Once you get into the professional era the question moves to how clubs will interact with one another, first joining in a league, and then how multiple leagues can coexist. There was no precedent for any of this, and these were not easy questions. How they worked this out is the history of professional baseball from about 1870 to the NL-AL peace of 1903. Then there are the rules themselves. Baseball was a schoolyard game adapted for genteel intramural club play. Then in the mid-1850s it was thrust into a competitive cauldron of clubs playing against other clubs, and taking any edge they could find. The instability of the 19th century rules is the response: a half-century of tweaking the rules to adjust for whatever it was that clubs had come up with since the previous tweak.

I see these as facets of the same question: How did we get here? The decision to write the rules book first was an accident of editorial interest. I am currently writing a second book, for University of Missouri Press, on the rise of baseball up to 1871. That is much more cultural history. I hope eventually to take the story through 1903. That will be more an organizational history: the development of the business of baseball.

Protoball: *The last decade of digital technology has opened doors to much factual material for us to process -- will people still be interested in early baseball history in a decade?*

Absolutely! We are in a period with the digital revolution making a large body of sources available all at once. This is an exciting time to be working the field. But the surge of interest came before the widespread availability of these sources. When I started it was still a matter of tracking down microfilm and bound volumes and taking notes. It still is, to a large extent. Far from everything has been digitized. This will still be true in ten years. And even with the material that has been digitized, the vagaries of OCR, the conversion of the image to text, is such that this material will still turn up nuggets the old fashioned way. In other words, you can't assume that you can search on "base ball" in a text and assume that everything there is to be found will turn up. The current interest is not merely based on the recent finds

Brooklyn Rules! Statistics on Brooklyn's Dominance of Early Baseball

By Bruce Allardice

A lot was said at November's Symposium on 19th-Century Brooklyn Baseball about how Brooklyn quickly replaced Manhattan/New York City as the mecca of baseball and the mecca of metropolitan New York City baseball. Conference Chair Peter Mancuso sums up the Conference's presentations by observing, "The Brooklyn Symposium (thanking Tom Gilbert and all its participants) made a very convincing argument, but on the basis of logical conjecture, that Brooklyn really became the center of the "Baseball Universe" in the middle decade of the 19th century." Author James Terry has claimed, by the late 1850s "Brooklyn was the center of the nascent baseball world.... In the 1860s, in the shadow of Manhattan, Brooklyn would boast the best baseball clubs in the land."¹ As early as 1860 one Brooklyn newspaper crowed, "Nowhere has the National game of Baseball taken firmer hold than in Brooklyn, and nowhere are there better players."² Brooklyn teams in fact dominated the unofficial (and, admittedly, highly suspect) "championships" of baseball in the 1860s.

At first glance it is perhaps odd that Brooklyn, then a separate city from New York, would supplant its older and larger neighbor. After all, the most common narrative of baseball's beginnings³ usually starts with 1845 and New York City's Knickerbocker Club. More modern scholarship places a more nuanced view of the centrality of the Knickerbockers (who seem to get founders credit primarily because they kept voluminous records), but even those works give primacy to New York City's baseball clubs.⁴ In the late 1850s Brooklyn was usually considered (at least by Manhattanites) to be New York's smaller, more rural cousin, with a population little more than 1/3 that of its neighbor.⁵ And yet within just a few years of adopting baseball (the first Brooklyn club was formed in December 1854), Brooklyn soon supplanted New York.

Why Brooklyn? The consensus of Symposium presenters focused on space—more accurately, Manhattan's lack of available space to practice and to play. Baseball historian Richard Hershberger writes, "There simply weren't enough places to play in Manhattan. This is why New York clubs ever went to New Jersey to play and why the nascent NABBP tried to get play grounds in Central Park. A correspondent to the *Sunday Mercury* of March 4, 1860 wrote about this, and ascribed the Brooklyn clubs' superior play to their easier access to places to practice."

While all the attendees of the 2021 Symposium agreed that Brooklyn quickly surpassed New York City (NYC), no statistical proof of that assertion was given. Being the evidence geek that I am, I wanted to do some sleuthing to back that assertion up with statistics. And so far as an assertion can be backed up by statistics, this assertion can.

Early baseball researchers are fortunate to be able to access the work Bob Tholkes has done. Bob Tholkes' Register of Interclub Matches (RIM) database (accessible at www.Protoball.org) contains listings of all games reported in the major New York and Brooklyn newspapers 1858-65. Over 4,000 games are listed. The file is searchable, and in doing various searches, I can confirm what was asserted--at least at the level of games played and reported.

In the years 1858-1865, 1333 games were played in Brooklyn while 401 were played in Manhattan/NYC--a 3.3 to 1 ratio. Even if one adds the 247 games played at Elysian Fields, New Jersey as NYC games,⁶ the total is still only one-half that of Brooklyn.

1857 seems to be the year NYC lost its primacy. That year, 85 games were played in Brooklyn, versus 11 in NYC. Considering only the location of the clubs rather than location of the games (probably a better measure, as it accounts for NYC clubs playing elsewhere) in 1857 134 Brooklyn clubs or sides played, versus 69 NYC clubs, a 2-1 ratio in Brooklyn's favor. This 2-1 disparity continues thru 1861.

The following Table illustrates Brooklyn's dominance:

Year	Games in Brooklyn	Games in NYC	Brooklyn Clubs	NYC Clubs
1856 ⁷	21	20	49	47
1857	85	11	134	69
1858	200	42	423	194
1859	247	74	495	242
1860	274	111	641	397
1861	140	18	316	155

However one looks at it, as early as 1857 Brooklyn baseball dominated that of NYC. The numbers back up the anecdotal evidence of Brooklyn's centrality.

¹ James L. Terry, *Long Before the Brooklyn Dodgers: Baseball in Brooklyn, 1855-1884* (Jefferson, NC, McFarland, 2018).

2 Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, May 10, 1860.

3 Or at least the “New York” game’s beginnings.

4 Cf. John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011), especially chapters 2 and 3.

5 The 1860 census gives New York City (then, just Manhattan) 813,669 inhabitants to Brooklyn’s 279,122.

6 Which isn’t really valid. Elysian Fields isn’t in New York now and wasn’t at the time. Plus many of the Elysian Field games featured Brooklyn and non-NYC clubs.

7 From Tholkes RIM, 1845-57.

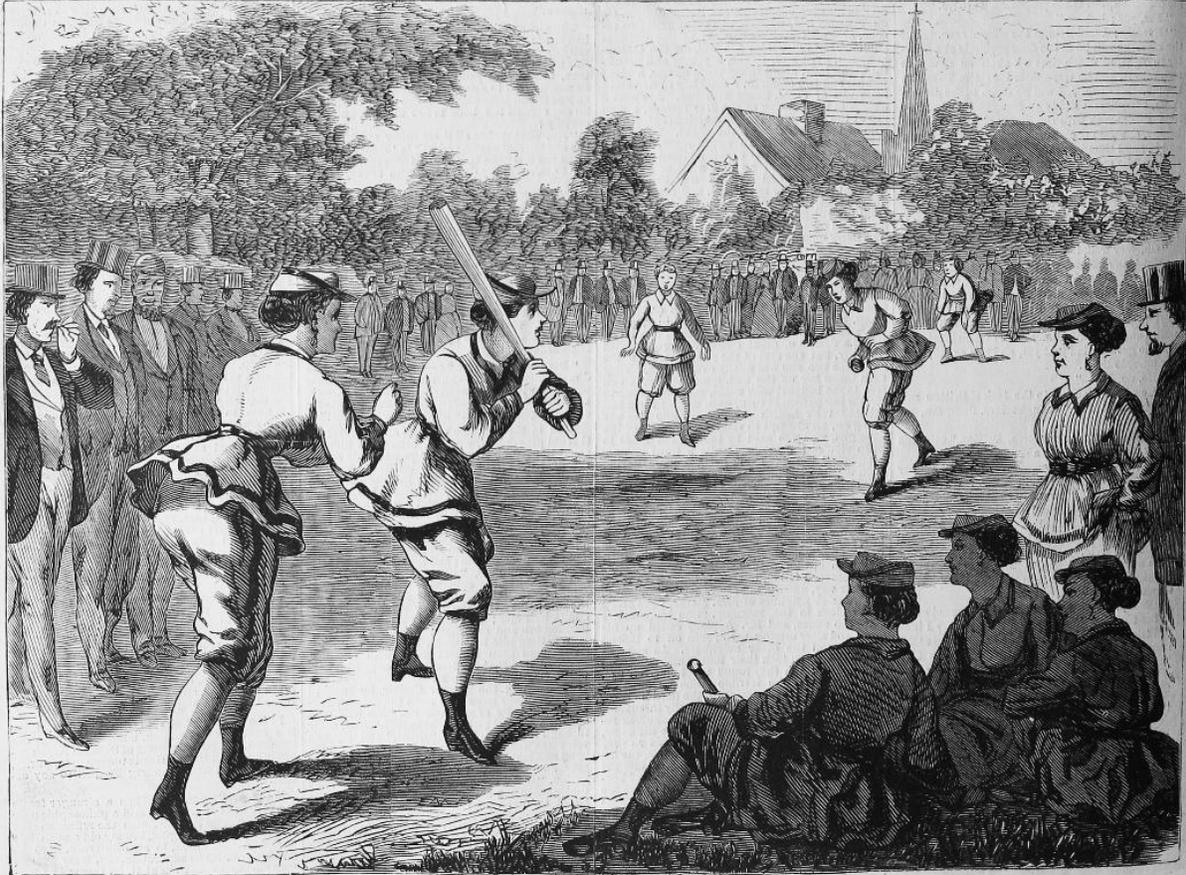
Early Women’s Baseball

Bob Tholkes sends us this early account of an 1867 women’s game, from the Harrisburg *Patriot*, Aug. 17, 1867, with this comment: “The Harrisburg note is exceptionally friendly for the time; almost all 1867 references to women and baseball are sarcastic...”

NOVEL BASE BALL GAME.—The local of the Columbia *Herald* recently witnessed a game of base ball played by young ladies of that town. In describing the affair he says: “It is not true, as Brick Pomerooy asserts, that the lovely players lose skeletons, waterfalls and strings while running the home bases. The ones we behold running were as agile and athletic as young deers, and fairly cut the wind as they sped to home base.” Couldn’t some of the young ladies of Harrisburg be induced to get up a match game and try their skill with the bat and ball? The novelty of the affair would not fail to attract a large crowd of spectators. “Our national amusement” is a great institution.

n
te
H
te
b
tl
E
n
te
y
a
H
p
e
p
a
e
s
e

John Thorn adds to this (in his OurGame blog): “Two nines competed in 1868, at Peterboro, New York, an upstate village some seventy-five miles from Seneca Falls where the women’s suffrage movement was born. The contest was reported in a New York newspaper called *Day’s Doings*, a sensationalist sex-story journal self-avowedly devoted to “current events of romance, police reports, important trials, and sporting news.”” John also furnished this image, which was (for the time) surprisingly free of sex and sensationalism.



THE LAST ILLUSTRATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS.—A FEMALE BASE-BALL CLUB AT PETERBORO, N. Y.—SEE PAGE 275.

(*Day's Doings*, Oct. 3, 1868)

Potpourri

Lazy Ballplayers?

From Bob Tholkes comes an 1867 newspaper's criticism of ballplayer's laziness and bad habits:

TIME OF GAME—TWO HOURS AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTES.

MUTUAL VS. PASTIME.—When we made the remark that the victory of the Mutuals over the Nationals almost insured their success against all of the other clubs they were to meet except the Athletics, we presupposed some good sense in their management, and not such an arrangement as that of putting in players who have not played in a game this season. The *World* says that the four players left out were laid aside to “rest them” for the match of to-day. What delicate fellows they must be who cannot stand three hours’ work a day in a ball match! A match game at ball requires three hours work out of the twenty-four, and this can be rendered day after day without any unusual drain upon the system provided the players are as particular in their habits as it is requisite that all athletes should be who aim at excellence in any contest in which the physical powers are required. But if rich wine suppers are indulged in, together with the consequent late hours and dissipation, without proper rest and attention to health, then one game a week becomes hard work. Bad management lost the match, as it did others of the Mutual games this season. However, if they will

(the Brooklyn *Union*, Aug. 28, 1867)

1869 Baseball Player Salaries

Newspaper analysis of ballplayer salaries is nothing new, as this from the Chicago *Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1869, shows:

SPORTING MATTERS.

BASE BALL.

The latest quotations of base ball salaries, in consequence of the prospective formation of crack clubs in Chicago, Boston, and Cincinnati, are given by the *New York Sun*, as follows:

	<i>Per Year.</i>
Catchers.....	\$2,000
Pitchers.....	2,000
First base.....	1,500
Second base (good general players).....	2,500
Third base, (great demand, few in the market)..	3,000
Short-stop (good general players).....	2,000
Fielders	1,500

By comparison, the average yearly salary of an urban working man in 1870 was about \$380. At \$2,000 per year, the average pitcher made about 5 times as much as the average worker—and was able to earn more in the off season. While these aren't Max Scherzer 2021 salaries, they must have seemed pretty good to your aspiring ballplayer of 1869.

Baseball a "Business," Not an Amusement

A year later, the situation was (according to the Bradford *United Opinion*, Dec. 2, 1870) even more unseemly: Baseball had become (horrors!) a "Business."

Base Ball as a Business.

Base ball has become a business with several famous clubs ; and certainly to one who does not play it, it seems that balls as hard as iron hurled with the swiftness of a bullet, the game can scarcely any longer be called an amusement.

“ Ten dollars a day, five dollars more for hotel bills, and twice as much more for railroad fares,” seem to be the wages of a professional base ball player. Salaries we are told were first paid to pitchers and catchers, and finally to other members of a nine ; and it was reserved for Chicago to systematize the business of base ball. The business began by one club, which had achieved some fame for skill, travelling through the country to play with the local clubs, ambitious to try their bats and to win glory. The two clubs, on such trials, shared the receipts from gate money, and the famous Cincinnati “ Red Stockings ” made, in 1868, seven thousand dollars in the season, besides their expenses, by such exhibitions.

Latest Protoball Additions

1866 Massachusetts State Championship Game

BASE BALL. The ninth match game of base ball for the possession of the silver ball, the emblem of championship of the State, was played on the Common on Saturday afternoon between the Lowell Club of Boston and the Granite Club of Holliston, and proved an easy victory to the Lowell Club, by 43 to 11 for the Granites. The following is the score:

GRANITE.	O.	R.	LOWELL.	O.	R.
Leland, L., r f.....	3	2	Lovett, p.....	2	7
Hoffman, J., c.....	4	1	Joslin, 3 b.....	3	6
Leland, J., c f.....	3	1	Allino, r f.....	6	3
Hoffman, G., 3 b....	3	2	Rogers, c f.....	4	5
Andrews, 2 b.....	5	0	Lowell, l f.....	2	6
Horton, s s.....	3	1	Sumner, 2 b.....	5	4
French, 1 b.....	3	0	Wilder, c.....	1	5
Belcher, l f.....	2	2	Crosby, 1 b.....	3	5
Richardson, p.....	1	2	Thompson, s s.....	1	6
	—	—		—	—
	27	11		27	47

Runs in each Innings.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<i>Granite.....</i>	0	1	2	4	2	0	0	1	1	—11
<i>Lowell.....</i>	0	10	3	8	8	5	1	4	6	—47

Passed balls—Granite 7, Lowell 7.

Ninth "silver ball" game in one year!

The same newspaper also reported on a game for the Connecticut state championship. Note that the state championships were being played at about the same time of the year as our modern World Series. (from the *Boston Transcript*, Oct. 1, 1866, reporting on a Sept. 29th game. Courtesy Scott Rizzi)

The End of the Massachusetts Game?

“The Massachusetts Base Ball Association, composed of clubs playing what is know[n] as the Massachusetts game, has been broken up, and most of the clubs are now practicing the National game.” (Boston *American Traveler*, July 26, 1867. See Protoball Chronology 1867.25)

Bob Tholkes comments “Didn’t know there was a funeral announcement.” Richard Hershberger observes that he hasn’t found any report of the Association showing any sign of life after the Civil War (1865).

Record Score in Australia in 1857—But What Baseball Game were They Playing?

From *Bell’s Life* (an Australian publication), March 7, 1857, comes an article titled “The American Game of Base Ball.” It’s a report of a game “Saturday last” at Carlton Gardens, a popular Melbourne meeting place, between the Richmond and Collingwood members of the “Melbourne Base Ball Club.” In a three-inning game, 14 players on each side, Collingwood won 350-230! One ballplayer scored 23 runs in the first inning alone. Australian baseball expert Phil Lowry suggests that “rules called for a run to be counted each time a baserunner reached a new base.”

Further research indicates that many of the players were American’s resident in Melbourne. It is unclear from the game account exactly what type of “American Baseball” (New York, Massachusetts, or some variant) was played.

Find of the Month

Earliest Record of a Baseball Game in Cuba?

While it is thought that baseball was being played in Cuba by the late 1860s, definitive proof has been hard to come by. Recently Bob Tholkes found an item in the Washington (DC) *Evening Star*, Sept. 10, 1867: “The Havana base ball club challenged and played its first match with the Matanzas club on Sunday last, but with no result. Another game is to come off there to-day.”

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.



BULLETIN BOARD

The December issue of SABR's *Baseball Research Journal* contained three articles of interest to readers of this newsletter. Chad Moody writes about "Lang Ball," a game invented in the early 1890s by one C. C. Lang, and which resembles kickball. Bob Tholkes takes a "Safari" through 1866 newspapers, highlighting the odd, the funny, and the interesting baseball events of that year. Bruce Allardice writes a first-ever statistical analysis of baseball 1866-70, titled "Runs, Runs, and More Runs."

Bruce Allardice's September presentation to the 19th Century Baseball Committee on "Base Ball in the Wild West" is among the Committee presentations that were recorded and can be viewed. Bob Bailey writes:

"All Speakers Series presentations are available through the SABR website. Here is a link to the page:

<https://sabr.org/19th-century-baseball-speaker-series/>.

This page lets you view the Zoom presentation and, in a separate file, review the slides presented.

The presentation is posted several days after the live presentation."

SABR's latest "Business of Baseball" Newsletter will feature an article by Bruce Allardice examining the population of Major League cities 1876-1880 and proposing a new approach to evaluating MLB's choice of what cities they awarded franchises to.

Early registration is now open for the [SABR Virtual Analytics Conference](#), which will be held over three days in online sessions from March 18-20, 2022. We'll bring together the top minds in the baseball analytics community to discuss, debate, and share insightful ways to analyze and examine the great game of baseball. [Register today to join us!](#)

The 2022 [Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference](#) will be held at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. The 13th Conference is scheduled for April 29-30, 2022.

Oyez! Oyez! Come and see
the Old English Game.

STOOLBALL MATCH

(By kind permission of the S.C.C.C.) at the

COUNTY GROUND, HOVE,
FRIDAY NEXT, September 17th,
at 2.30 p.m., 1920

East Sussex XI. v. West Sussex XI.

(W. W. Grantham, Capt.)

(W. J. Chalk, Capt.)

(8 Ladies and 3 Men aside)

WET OR FINE.

ADMISSION FREE. Silver Collection in aid of the
Royal Sussex County Hospital.

—LADIES' ORCHESTRA.—

TEAS supplied by Cosmos & Co.

Crowhurst, Printer, Brighton.