

# Baseball Origins Newsletter

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

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

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# **BESSIES'S SCOREBOOK: A WINDOW TO THE PAST**



**By Marty Payne**

## **Preface**

Most 19<sup>th</sup> Century baseball historians have observed that baseball proliferated throughout the country in three, somewhat distinct, diffusions. The first of these was the New York Game evolving and spreading in that metropolitan area until it spills over to Hoboken, NJ. During this time the rules of this version of baseball were gradually adopted and adapted. It was an elitist game of physical fitness and social standing as symbolized by the New York Knickerbockers. A second diffusion occurs in the later part of the 1850's as baseball seemed to follow powerful cultural forces. Young baseball players set out to make their fortunes, following transportation routes to growing commercial centers. Baseball quickly leapt south to Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, and westward to places like Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. Smaller cities proximate to these commercial centers were often included in this growing period.

The third and final diffusion was simply an extension of the second, coming after the inconvenience of the Civil War. Once the conflict was over, steam transportation not only pushed ever westward, but also into every rural nook and cranny it could stick its nose. The young men of New York codified a set of rules, imposed values, and provided a setting for social and physical activity. Now organized, this version of baseball rushed

into areas where games like o' cat still prevailed. Bessie's book is a window into this diffusion.

### **Introduction**

Bessie's book was found thirty years ago in an old file cabinet in a small local library, marked as the property of a local historical society. Photos were taken at the time. The current location of the book is unknown.

The book was about 6x8 inches and in fair to poor condition at the time. It might be called a grassroots scorebook in that it does not pertain to metropolitan teams often associated with such texts. The book is signed with the designation of Linkwood, MD as the source of its origin. Linkwood is not even listed on the county map of 1866. It owed its existence to the Dorchester-Delaware Railroad which began laying track that same year to connect Cambridge, a bustling port town of about 2000 people on the Chesapeake Bay, with the New York-Norfolk RR that ran the spine of the Delmarva Peninsula. At its peak, Linkwood consisted of a railroad station, a warehouse, a canning house, a boarding house, a school house, and later, a new post office. With less than a half dozen private residences, Linkwood was never anything more than a whistle stop.

### **Dating the Book**

Although the book is signed with a location, there is no ascribed date. It is left to mostly circumstantial evidence within its pages to suggest when these games were recorded. The first of these features is the method used to keep score. It simply records outs and runs. While this style was still being used in the early 1880s, it suggests an earlier date. Another feature of the book is there are no team names. Where one might expect to see the Star v. Resolute, e.g., there are no such designations. Another observation was that it is mostly the same people from page to page, freely moving from first to second nines game to game. The fact that there were two first and second nines is an oddity of itself. Most clubs formed with one of each.



The point wasn't just to play baseball, but play it like they did in the cities. Nobody wanted to be "behind the times," This required the official bat and ball, uniforms, caps, cleats, and equipment, all at a cost to the young participants. But even as the Linkwoodians were adopting this Knickerbocker club structure, cultural forces were transforming this perspective. Steamboats had plied the waters of the Chesapeake Bay for decades, but railroads were a novelty. They did not exist in this region prior to the Civil War. Between 1866 and 1867 five railroads who had patiently awaited the end of hostilities, were completing their lines from various port towns on the bay to the New York-Norfolk. From the very beginning clubs were hopping onto steam transport to go to other communities to play those clubs. These were gala events, with emphasis on the social aspect.

People would pile into a train, steamboat, or on a crowded sloop in tow. Typically, the event included all or a combination of the following: a welcoming committee, a tour of the town or community, lunch, a big parade to the grounds with brass bands, two games of baseball if time allowed, followed by dinner and/or dance, speeches and toasts. These were often all-day affairs, sometimes spilling into the next. These sprawling events were gradually refined and condensed.

The costs of transportation was added to that of uniforms and equipment, but a substantial part of the expenses lay with the host team. The visitors might bring fifty, or 250 people along with a brass band. The expectation was that all had to be fed once if not twice. Restaurants or community halls might be rented out, or homes opened in hospitality to the traveling contingent. Communities might declare a holiday and shut down businesses for the day.

Club memberships alone could not meet the fiscal needs. Baseball players quickly shed their affiliation with private clubs for community attachment where a board of directors was formed, sponsors and subscriptions solicited from the community at large, and support groups like ladies' auxiliaries contributed to the finances of the team. The quality of rural baseball depended directly on just how much a community was willing to spend. Competition and money replaced physical fitness and social standing. Knowing that this transition took place, and when, also helps date the book.

### **The Box Score**

There is a box score from 1875 that may support the proposed date and location of the book. The team is listed as the Nameless of Linkwood. There were no team names listed in Bessie's book, so it would make sense to use that as a designation for an outside game. Six of the players and the umpire in the box score are found in the book. A check of property records indicate the three new players introduced in the box score

were not “imported” or “foreign” men, rather they were also residents of the Linkwood area, yet they are not found in the book. Also, this game is not recorded in its pages. If this box score was from Bessie’s year, this game should be prominently featured. For these reasons, it was postulated that this was Bessie’s team, but sometime after the year of the scorebook.

**Star vs. Nameless.**  
 A game of base ball took place last Friday evening between the Nameless of Linkwood and Star of Cambridge on the grounds of the latter. The game was called on the seventh inning on account of a severe accident to the pitcher of the Star, they not having the “tenth man” on the ground. The following is the score:

NAMELESS.		R.	O.	STARS.		R.	O.
Thomas	1 b	2	3	Grace	1 f	1	4
Handy	p	2	3	Hopkins	p	0	3
Phillips	3 b	3	2	Stewart	c f	1	3
W Beckwith	2 b	1	4	Smith	2 b	3	2
Phillips	1 f	3	2	Beckwith	3 b	3	2
Robinson	c f	2	1	LeCompte	c	4	1
J Philips	c	2	1	Davidson	1 b	4	1
Roberson	r f	1	2	W Hopkins	r f	1	3
Vincent	s s	0	3	Steele	s s	1	1
Total,		16	21.			18	21

Umpire, Anthony Vincent. Scorer J. Shepherd. Game called at 2.30 P. M.

Based on the factors offered above, the proposed date of Bessie’s book is 1870 + or – 2 years.

### Genealogy

In Bessie’s book there are approximately forty names. Most are first initial and surname, but there are a handful with full names. Although it does nothing to pinpoint an exact date, a simple genealogical exercise does put many of Bessie’s people in place and time.

A fully fleshed out profile of Bessie may not be possible. She signed the book as Miss Bessie Collison. The most likely candidate found for Miss Bessie is Isabel Collison of Caroline County. She would have been an appropriate age of 21 in 1870. Unfortunately, the 1870 census is the last record of her. Whether she died, married or moved, she vanishes without a trace. The Collison’s were one of the earliest settlers on Maryland’s Eastern Shore in the 1660s, and there are several extended family trees and histories. All the ones consulted run into a dead end with Isabel with the 1870 census.

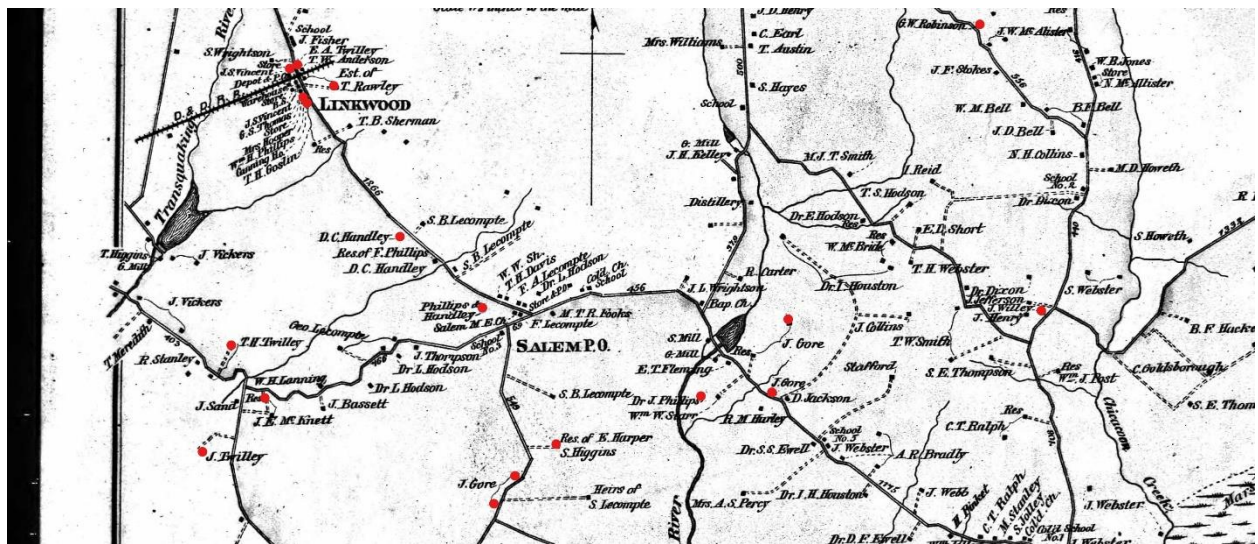
Using the optimal birth range of 1840-1850, several players from the book were found. They came from four of the eight districts of the county, some 6-8 miles distant.

William Cook was one, a liquor salesman who lived near East New Market. John Phillips was a farmer who hailed from Bucktown. He died tragically in 1892 when a team of horses broke and threw him from a wagon. He left a widow and 6 children. This exercise placed these, and other of Bessie's players in the area around the proposed date and time.

### Property

One thing noticed in the genealogical exercise was property ownership by some of the players. In order to see this demographic more clearly, the U.S. Index county land records for 1877 were consulted. This index has the several district maps of Dorchester County where ownership in this rural area, names are written on the actual map location, first initial and surname. Thirty of the approximately 40 names in Bessie's book can be linked to property ownership. Many of these were actual players, while matches of surnames in a sparsely populated area indicates the proximity of immediate family. While a few of Bessie's players come from slightly farther afield, most seem to be clustered within a short radius of this depot of the Dorchester-Delaware RR and the old wagon road running to the south and east. The data suggests that real estate speculation came with the arrival of the railroad.





The influence of transportation on the diffusion of baseball is generally acknowledged, and this little train depot may provide a glimpse of that dynamic. On the wagon road west of Linkwood was Hicksburg, and to the southeast lay Salem. At best, each was but a scattered cluster of houses with a general store or post office that gave them a sense of community. Both had populations similar to Linkwood and were within five miles of it, but neither had a railroad, nor a baseball club at this time. The Dorchester-Delaware would soon stretch north to reach East New Market and turn that little town into a regional agricultural commercial center. Many anticipated the same future for Linkwood.

This speculation was widespread around Linkwood in the 1870's. One such entrepreneur was John S. Vincent, a shortstop on Bessie's club. When the Dorchester-Delaware began laying track in 1866 Vincent was about 20 years old, and from a prominent local family. He took the job as an agent for the railroad. Vincent is also variously referred to as a farmer and post master, all in addition to his railroad position. His father had been active in the local real estate market since the 1830's, so young John came natural to his speculation. He had holdings in both Linkwood and Hicksburg. Throughout the 1870s Vincent bought and sold eleven properties, hoping for a boom that never came. Linkwood's sole street was named for him.

Another name in Bessie's book is Daniel Gore, also the product of one of the more influential families of the area. Daniel's father was James. Prior to the Civil War he had owned 9 slaves, a moderately high number for the time and place. In addition to his farm, James Gore had an unspecified retail income. He also happened to be on the board of directors of the Dorchester-Delaware RR. Like Vincent, James Gore anticipated an increase in real estate values, conducting nearly 30 property transactions from the late 1860s through the 1870s.



But not everyone in Bessie's book were a part of this speculation. The oldest player found was Joseph McKnett, born in 1840. Among his fellow club members was one of his many half brothers, Charles Dean. McKnett married a Vincent, related of course, to John. She in turn was raised by a Ms. Twilley, related to Joseph Twilley, neighbor of McKnett and also on Bessie's team. The close family and community ties of a rural area are apparent. Yet the question remains, why baseball in Linkwood? Unless it was the railroad that drew baseball to a place that was little more than a dream.

### **The Signature**

One of the unique features of Bessie's book is her signature. She signs it on one page with Linkwood written beneath it. On the opposite page, she signs it again, this time followed by Chateau (pronounced locally as Chaw-taw), the site of a Methodist church and a few houses 3-4 miles from Linkwood. Who signs a score book? Today it is easy to assume it to be the role of scorekeeper. This in fact, would be a logical conjecture. Women scorekeepers in the 1860s or '70s were not unheard of but it was rare, perhaps more so in a rural region. Whether Bessie was a scorekeeper or not may be irrelevant. What is important is that she signed the book. This in itself suggests that Bessie had some significant relationship with the club. While exactly what that role was may or may not be definitively answered, there is another curiosity to the book that may suggest a different and unexpected role for Bessie.



### The Chateau Mite Society

Written sideways on a different page is the “Chateau Mite Society.” What is a mite society? Briefly and generally, they had their origins in the Second Great Awakening, a religious revival centered in the early 1800s. A majority of the converts were women. The eventual result was the proliferation of ladies auxiliaries in churches. Some referred to themselves as “cent” or “mite” societies, and the term was used across denominational divides. The source came from the New Testament parable where an old widow contributes her mite or penny to Jesus of Nazareth, after which he declared that her contribution was greater than that of any other. Mite societies were predominately women. It appears that most mite money stayed local, providing funds for building maintenance, alms for the poor, or given to the diocese for broader distribution. But mite money did make its way to other causes.

Another outcome of this religious revival was the rise of missionary societies. These ranged from the international, to the national, to regional and home missions. Like the

mites, missionary societies were largely staffed by women. The missions found the mites a logical source for funding and recruitment. They were looking for young, single, educated ladies to send out as teachers. Early in the revival they were often sent alone into the wilds of western Pennsylvania and New York, and later the mid-west. The strategy was that women were better suited to encourage people (especially men) into the churches. All that being said, what does the Chateau Mite Society have to do with the Linkwood baseball club?

Is the club being sponsored by a mite society? Likely not with the escalation of costs, yet possible if done in the early years as a private club before community identity and competition prevailed. Is Miss Bessie a missionary? Is she a member of the Chateau Mite Society, charged with the task of getting these young heathens into church? Is she both sponsor and missionary? Or is it none of these? Is this a fleeting glimpse of the cultural concept of Muscular Christianity in early action, or is the mite society involvement here just an isolated, singular occurrence?

### **Conclusion**

Though brief and restricted in scope, much may be learned from a simple rural scorebook. Imagine having more of them. What more could we learn about the dynamics of the third diffusion of the New York Game? The 1840s produced many pioneers. The 1850s were about expansion. But in the late 1860s we find our baseball colonists and settlers, those who planted baseball deep into our national culture. This is when an urbanized ball and stick game returned to its simpler, rustic origins to become the National Pastime in more than name. If they were playing baseball in Linkwood, then they were playing baseball everywhere.

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### **Sources**

*Journal of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of Easton, 1884.*

*Evangelistic Fragments: Doing Mite Box Capitalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, Hillary Kaell, Cambridge Press, 2017.

“Reformers and Role Models: Women Educators in Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Upper South,” Mary Carroll Johansen, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 2011, p. 429.

U.S. Index County Land Management Maps: 1877, Maryland Land Records. Ancestry.com.

Miss Bessie’s Scorebook, c. 1870.

# Data on the Coverage of Baseball in Early Newspapers

By Bruce Allardice

The Origins Committee is intended to cover the rise in baseball prior to 1871, when the first professional baseball leagues began. By 1870 the game was well established, with recorded games and/or clubs in every present-day state in the nation, as well as the US Territories.

But a focus on pre-Civil War, pre-1861 newspaper mentions of baseball (which was two words, “base ball,” at the time) shows that, if newspaper coverage is used as a proxy for familiarity with the game, the game had already entered the national lexicon by 1860. T

Other essays have covered the total number of mentions of “base ball” This essay will look at the geographic spread of the coverage. Hopefully, this essay will help dispel the “hoary myth” that baseball spread because New Yorkers (evoking images of the Alexander Cartwright as Johnny Appleseed) carried baseball with them in their migrations though the nation. While New Yorkers undoubtedly carried the word of baseball with them when they settled in other states, we see that by 1860 knowledge of baseball already existed in every state via local newspaper coverage.

I did a search of the common online newspaper databases (newspapers.com, newspaperarchive.com, genealogybank.com, and others) for the years 1857-1860. Of the 34 states that existed prior to 1861, “base ball” was mentioned in every state but two—the new western state of Oregon; and sparsely settled Florida.

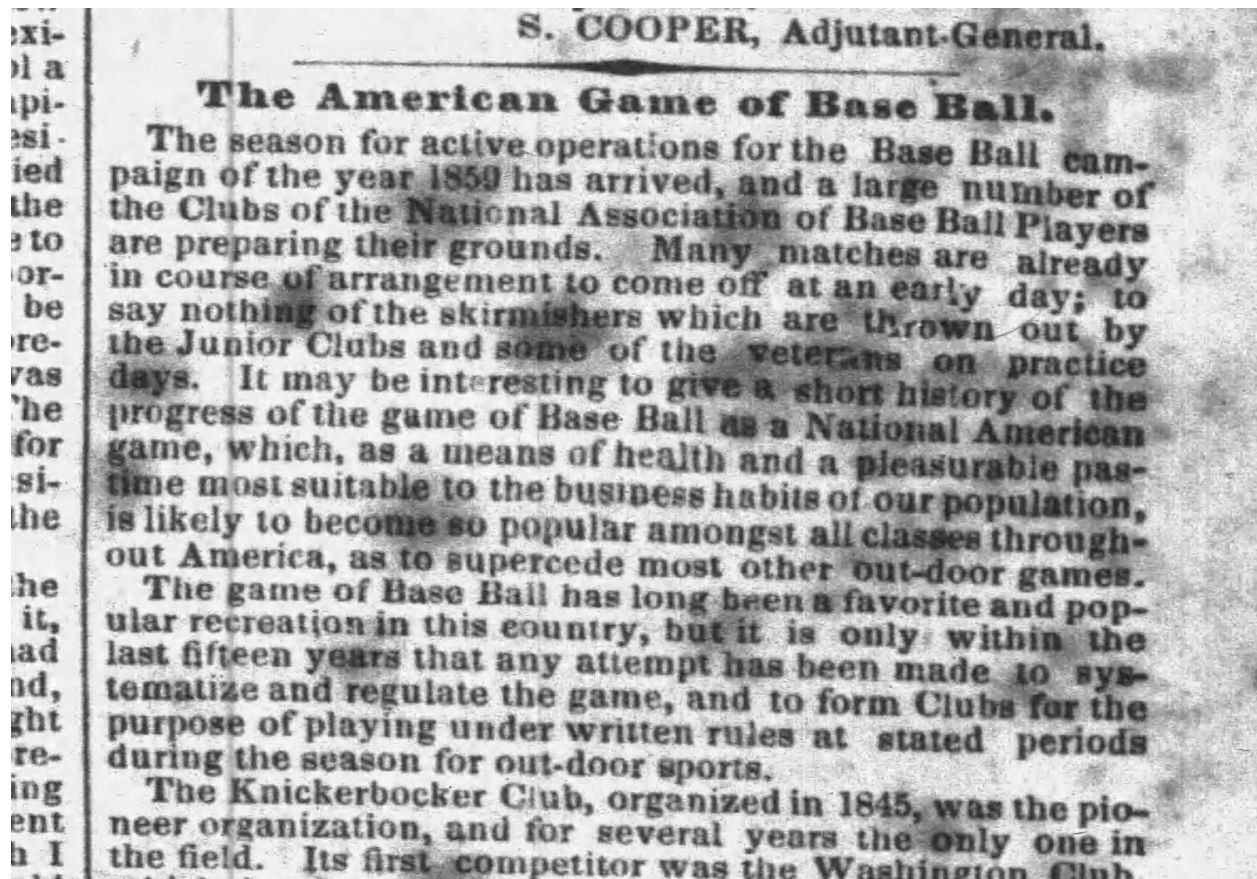
This search is only of newspapers of that state. “Sporting” publications such as *Spirit of the Times* and *The New York Clipper*, while centered in New York City, had a nationwide list of readers. A search of the *Clipper* 1857-60 reveals that they had readers (and regular correspondents) in both Florida and Oregon.

Just from newspapers alone, we thus can verify that people in every state were able to read about baseball prior to the Civil War.

## Example of One State—South Carolina

Focusing on one state, South Carolina, where no report of organized baseball prewar has been found, shows that interested South Carolinians were, via the newspapers and other ties, perfectly familiar with NYRBB.

See, for example, this in the Charleston *Daily Courier*, April 19, 1859, reprinting a New York *Express* piece on the history of baseball, and of the March 9th National Association of Base Ball Players convention



The *Daily Courier* and Charleston *Mercury* were the two primary newspapers of the state. The *Mercury* featured a regular "New York Correspondent," who wrote of doings in New York and often about baseball (See the *Mercury*, Aug. 27, 1860).

The state of South Carolina, and especially the port city of Charleston, also had regular commercial ties to New York City,

regular advertised day, whether full or not full.

**FOR CHARLESTON—Commercial Line—**  
At Pier 17 E.R., foot of Pine street—First Vessel—  
to-morrow—Freight taken as low as by any other line—The  
regular packet brig EMILY, Davis, master, will take what  
freight offers, and clear as above.

For freight or passage, apply on board, or  
**DUNHAM & DIMON, 67 South st.**

New York *Commercial Advertiser*, June 14, 1858, advertising freight trips to Charleston as well as New Yorkers (familiar with baseball) who either lived in Charleston, or traveled to Charleston to do business. The 1860 census lists 471 Charlestonians as born in New York, 131 of these men between the ages of 15 and 35, many of whom had been exposed to base ball at some point.

The newspapers stirred up baseball interest in at least one South Carolinian, initials “G. W. R.,” who wrote the New York *Clipper* asking how he could obtain a copy of the rules of baseball. [New York *Clipper*, Oct. 6, 1860]

### **Dissemination of the Rules of Base Ball**

Of course the New York rules game necessitates a knowledge of—the rules. Here the 1857 rules are usually considered the core of the modern game. But in the states just starting to adopt baseball, how widespread was knowledge of those rules? Here again readers of *Spirit* or *The Clipper* could read those rules and familiarize themselves with them. However, those rules were not generally publicized in the local newspapers 1857-59. In fact, only one newspaper found so far, the Macon (GA) *Telegraph* of Nov. 16, 1858, reprinted those rules in their entirety.

It appears that dissemination of the new rules to areas outside greater New York depended less on local newspapers and more on the sporting press.

However, the new rules were published as part of an 1859 book, “Base Ball Players Pocket Companion” (By Mayhew and Bader. Available as of May 10, 1859 (Boston *Evening Transcript*, May 9, 1859)). Newspaper advertisements for the sale of this book were widespread, appearing in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

**Books on Cricket**

—AND—

**BASE BALL PLAYING!**

—FOR SALE BY—

**THOMAS L. WHITE,**  
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,  
**105.....Canal Street..... 105**

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**THE CRICKET FIELD;** or, The History and Science of Cricket. By the Author of "The Principles of Scientific Batting."

**THE CRICKET PLAYER'S POCKET COMPANION**—Containing Plans for Laying out the Grounds, forming Clubs, etc., etc.

**THE BASE BALL PLAYER'S POCKET COMPANION**--Containing Rules and Regulations for forming Clubs.  
a30 2p3t

**AT 105 CANAL STREET.**

Ad in the New Orleans *Crescent*, May 2, 1860

To sum up, people living outside New York had every opportunity to read about the game. While New York transplants undoubtedly helped spread the game, their diaspora was not the sole cause of the game's spread.

**Chart of States and their First Local Newspaper Mention of Base Ball.**

Statehood after 1870 in Boldface.

Alabama	1864 (1860?)	<b>Montana</b>	1866
<b>Alaska</b>	1868	Nebraska	1859
Arkansas	1857*	Nevada	1866
<b>Arizona</b>	1866	New Hampshire	1858
California	1858	New Jersey	1846
<b>Colorado</b>	1861	<b>New Mexico</b>	1867
Connecticut	1857	New York	1845 (1821?)
Delaware	1865	North Carolina	1862
<b>District of Columbia</b>	1858	<b>North Dakota</b>	1864
Florida	1865	Ohio	1858
Georgia	1859	<b>Oklahoma</b>	1869
<b>Hawaii</b>	1858	Oregon	1866
<b>Idaho</b>	1868	Pennsylvania	1858
Illinois	1856	Rhode Island	1857
Indiana	1859	South Carolina	1862
Iowa	1858	<b>South Dakota</b>	1869
Kansas	1858	Tennessee	1860
Kentucky	1858	Texas	1859
Louisiana	1859	<b>Utah</b>	1859
Maine	1858	Vermont	1858
Maryland	1858	Virginia	1860
Massachusetts	1853	<b>Washington</b>	1867
Michigan	1854	West Virginia	1859
Minnesota	1857	Wisconsin	1858
Mississippi	1860	<b>Wvoming</b>	1866
Missouri	1859		

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## Ball-Stock (Ball-Stick)—A German Form of Rounders

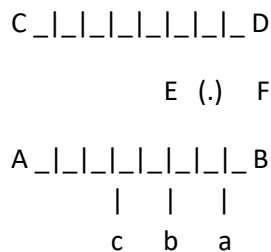
Ball-Stock team game similar to rounders, but having large safety areas instead of posts or bases. A feeder makes a short gentle toss to a batter, who tries to hit it. The batter-runner then chooses whether to run for a distant goal-line or a nearer one, for which there is a smaller chance of being plugged. The nearer station can hold several runners at once. Three missed swings makes an out, as does a caught fly. Versions of Ball-Stock are found in British and American boys' books in the mid-Nineteenth Century—for



example, Dick's *The Play Ground* (1866) p. 112. David Block's *Baseball Before We Knew It* (2005) p. 182 gives this game another name, "German Baseball," and notes it was first described in a 1796 German book.

One source gives an exact description of this game:

"BALL-Stock, or Ball-stick, is, as its name would indicate, a German game, but in some respects resembles our favorite English sport of 'Rounders.' The players are divided into two parties; six bases are then marked out, as in the accompanying Diagram; and for the first 'innings' the players toss up.



The in-players occupy the 'home' — A to B; the out-players station themselves as in Cricket, having one boy as feeder who stands at *a*, and another at *c* who acts as wicket-keeper, and tosses back the ball when tipped or missed. The striker stands at *b*. The ball having been thrown, and, we will suppose, well hit by the striker, he runs off to the base C — D, touching on his way at the resting base E — F; but if he has only tipped the ball, or struck it but a very short distance, or if it is stopped by one of the out-players, he should make off at once for the resting base E — F, and remain there until relieved by one of his fellow-players, whose fortunate hit may drive the ball so far out of range as to enable him to escape to C — D, or even run 'home.' If struck with the ball on his way from one base to another, he goes out. The other regulations are the same as in 'Rounders.'"

From Elliott, *The Playground and the Parlour* (1868), p. 57.

American books tend to compare Batl-Stock to Town Ball as well as Rounders.

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## The First Baseball Game in Chicago

By Bruce Allardice

Before the Chicago White Sox, before the Chicago Cubs, before the American Civil War—162 years ago this month--the first recorded baseball game in Chicago was played. And, perhaps as a portent of things to come, the Chicago club lost!

Chicago's first baseball team, the Union Base Ball club, was organized Aug. 12, 1856. It was the first baseball club formed in Illinois, and indeed the first club formed west of the Appalachian Mountains. A notice in the *Chicago Daily Democratic Press*, Aug. 12, 1856, announced its formation:

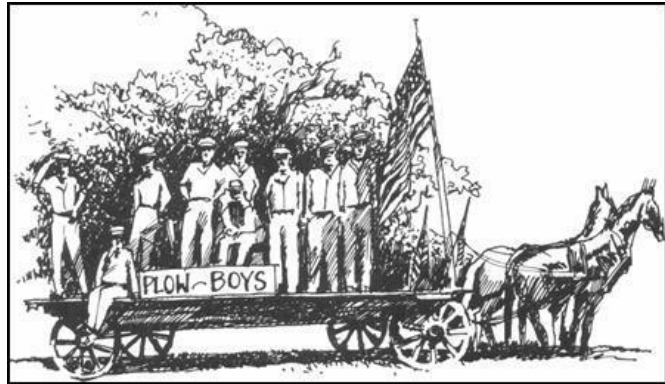
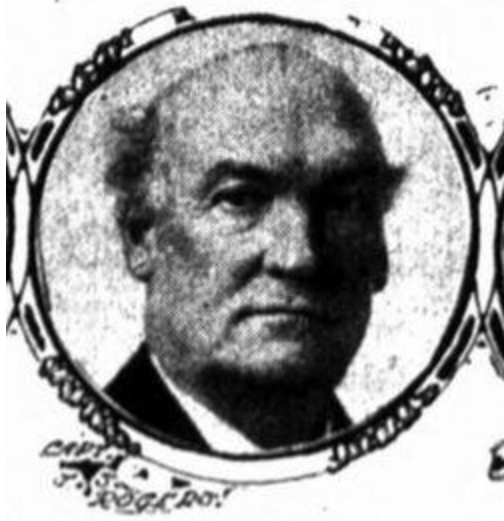
"Union Base Ball Club.--A company of young men will meet this (Tuesday) evening at the Hope Hose Carriage House at 8 o'clock, to organize under the above name and elect officers for the year. All active young men who need exercise and good sport, are invited to be present."

In this era the young men who organized the firefighting companies often took the lead in organizing baseball clubs. The Hope Hose company of volunteer firemen was considered one of the city's best. They owned fire-fighting equipment which they kept in a carriage house.

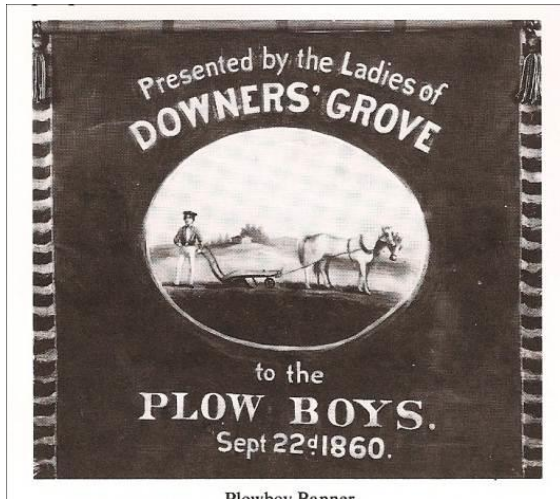
The members of the Union Club included many of the city's prominent businessmen. The officers were William Jauncey (1827-1909), a Chicago druggist, and James T. Furney (1830-1876), a grocer who'd lived in Brooklyn before coming to Chicago. Among the players were John J. Gillespie (1833-1901), city fire chief, later (1867-68) president of the Excelsior Base Ball Club of Chicago, and William Varian (1832-1920), a prominent physician.

The Union Club didn't play a recorded game until almost two years after the club's formation. We can presume that the club played intra-squad games, if nothing else, perhaps since no other baseball teams formed in Chicago during this time. The play took place just west of the modern Loop, where Chicago's cricket clubs also had their grounds.

On June 7, 1858, the *Chicago Tribune* announced an upcoming match of the Union Club with... a club from Downers Grove, then a small farming community 20 miles west of Chicago. The "Plow Boys" formed in 1856 as a social club, doubling as a parade group promoting Abraham Lincoln and the newly formed Republican Party. The DuPage County Historical Society describes them thus: "Led by DuPage County Sheriff Theodore S. Rogers of Downers Grove, they were spectacular in their red and white uniforms, as they rode on a wagon drawn by eight black horses. From the wagon's tall flagpole was suspended a large American flag. They took part in rallies in neighboring communities. A blue silk banner presented to them by the village ladies now hangs in the American Room of the Smithsonian Institution."



Theodore S. Rogers (1831-1917), captain of the Plowboys 1856-60



Rogers, 1863

The Downer's Grove club went by the colorful nickname "Plow Boys," perhaps in mockery of their rural origins, though most of the members lived and worked in the small towns of DuPage.

We don't know the score of this first game, but we know that, to Chicago's surprise, the "country" team won. And evidently a good time was had by all:

they incur upon them heavy expense, as well as upon our general trade.

**BASE BALL MATCH.**—A match game was played yesterday afternoon between the Union Base Ball Club, of this city, and the Downer's Grove Base Ball Club. Notwithstanding the hot weather, the sport was excellent. A spacious tent was erected on the Club's grounds, corner of West Harrison and Halstead streets, for the accommodation of visitors. The Downer's Grove Club came off victorious, the "country boys" being excellent players. In the evening the Union Club entertained their victors, at which several good speeches were made, after which the whole party attended the theatre in uniform.

The Union and Plowboy baseball clubs disappeared during the Civil War, in common with many other amateur clubs, as their members left to serve in the army. The Plowboys existed as a social/political club at least through 1886.

But for the Plowboys Baseball Club, their name and traditions live on in the person of the modern "Vintage Baseball" Plowboys, who play exhibition games throughout the Chicago area.

For more on early (pre-1871) baseball, visit [www.protoball.org](http://www.protoball.org).

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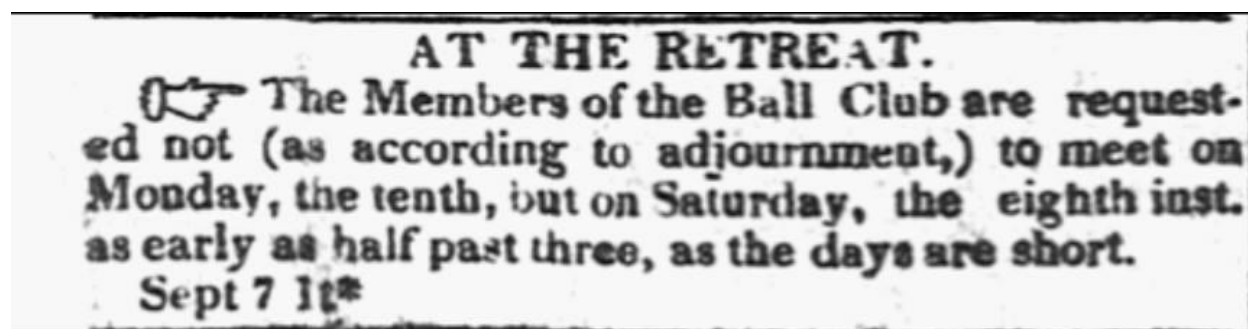
## 1823 Baseball Grounds in Downtown Manhattan--The Retreat

Some years ago George Thompson created a stir with his find of a baseball game played at "Jones' Retreat" in New York City in April 1823. From Protoball Chronologies1823.1:

The *National Advocate* of April 25, 1823, page 2, column 4, states:

"I was last Saturday much pleased in witnessing a company of active young men playing the manly and athletic game of 'base ball' at the (Jones') Retreat in Broadway [on the west side of Broadway between what now is Washington Place and Eighth Street]. I am informed they are an organized association, and that a very interesting game will be played on Saturday next at the above place, to commence at half past 3 o'clock, P.M. Any person fond of witnessing this game may avail himself of seeing it played with consummate skill and wonderful dexterity.... It is surprising, and to be regretted that the young men of our city do not engage more in this manual sport; it is innocent amusement, and healthy exercise, attended with but little expense, and has no demoralizing tendency."

The Retreat had been a meeting place for baseball as early as 1821.



Sept. 7, 1821 ad. The Retreat was at Broadway and Art (now, East 8<sup>th</sup>), about two blocks east of the modern Washington Square Park. it should be emphasized that the ball grounds were a grassy lot, nothing like an enclosed ball field or modern baseball park. See Rendel's 1821 map of NYC, insert, below (both of these from emails, Jan. 2023).



THE RETREAT,  
*At the corner of Arch st. and Broadway.*  
**W**ILLIAM JONES, formerly of Fulton st.  
 has removed to the above place, and pre-  
 pared it for public accommodation.  
 The position combines retirement from the  
 Main Road, with health and pleasure.  
 He solicits a share of public patronage, (for  
 which he has always been grateful) and will do  
 his best to oblige those who may favor him with  
 their custom. WM. JONES.  
 N. B. Dinner and Supper Parties supplied at  
 the shortest notice. Je 21 2w

*Evening Post, June 28, 1822*

Prior to William Jones, The Retreat had been named for previous proprietors, first William Neilson and then William B. Heyer.) Here, from the *Post* of June 5, 1821:

"THE RETREAT -- NEW HOTEL. ♦ The subscriber begs leave to inform all those who wish to encourage him with their patronage, that the elegant house at the corner of Art street and Broadway, opposite Vauxhall, is now open for their reception. Gentlemen may be accommodated with Board by the week or month. He keeps a constant supply of Ice Cream, and parties may be accommodated with Coffee, Tea and Relishes of various descriptions. HEYER.

"N. B. The Retreat is opposite Vauxhall Garden. The proprietor has thought proper, with the advice of his friends, to issue a limited number of Tickets of Admission to this House, on the day of Mr. Guille's [balloon] Ascension, at twenty-five cents each, to be had in refreshments, such as Ice Cream, Cake, Punch, Lemonade, &c. &c."

Interestingly, this advertisement appeared immediately below an ad for Niblo's Kensington House, which advertised its grounds perfect for "cricket, base, trap-ball, quoits ad other amusements," and promised to furnish "all the apparatus necessary for the above games." Could there be a baseball connection between the two? {see Hershberger article in *Base Ball*, and in *Our Game*. Chronologies 1821.5, 9) The Kensington House was located at modern 61<sup>st</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, opposite the Mt. Vernon Hotel.

The Vauxhall Garden mentioned was a pleasure garden in Manhattan, one of the first in the U.S., named for a famous pleasure garden in London. It was located east of Broadway, between Broadway and Bowery, extending northeast from 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

Details are lacking on the "ball club" that met at and played at The Retreat. Nor do we know what variation of "base ball" they played. But The Retreat may be the earliest known baseball grounds in the U.S.

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Note—see the Feb. 2021 Origins Newsletter for more on this venue.

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## Potpourri

### Depiction of Riverside Park, Boston, 1867



From The *New England Base Ballist*

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## First Ads for Baseball Equipment in Foreign Lands?

**BASE BALLS.**

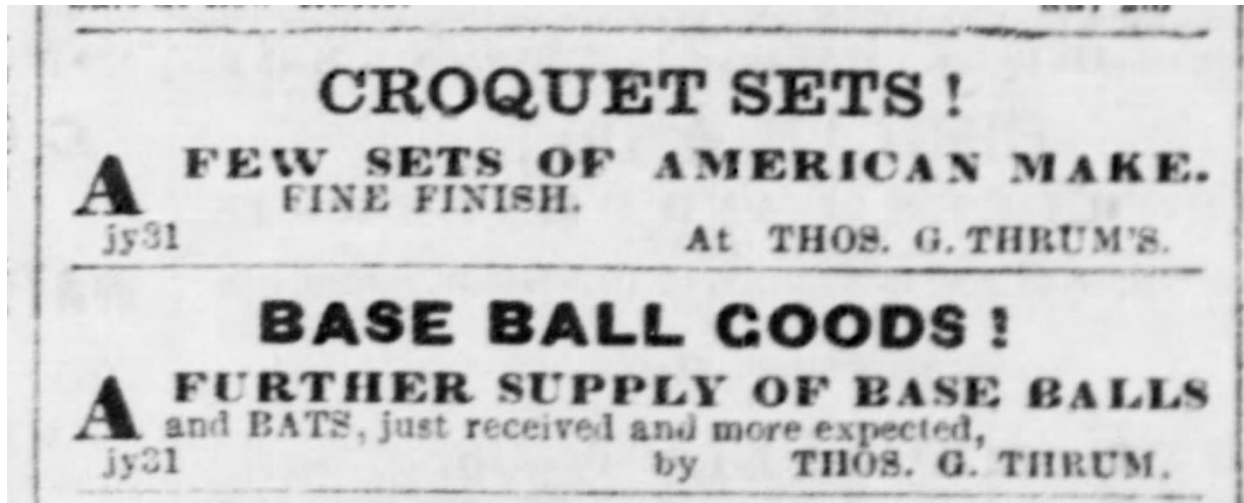
BASE BALLS at  
W. J. McCURRY'S BOOKSTORE.  
Guelph, June 5, 1868.

Guelph (Ontario, Canada) *Evening Mercury*. June 8. 1868. First outside the U.S.?

**CRICKET, FOOTBALL, and BASE BALL—**  
JOHN WISDEN and Co, OUTFITTERS for all the above, supply goods of the best quality only at the most reasonable prices. Appointed agents for the sale of Base Ball Implements as used by the Base Ball Clubs now in England in all their matches.  
Price Lists by post, free.  
In course of preparation, the CRICKETER'S ALMANAC for 1873, being the twelfth year of publication. The price of a/amanacs for each year since 1864, is, post free 1s 1d.—JOHN WISDEN and Co, 21, Cranbourn-street, London.



*Bell's Sporting Life*, Aug. 19, 1874 (around when the US baseball players visited England)—First outside of North America?



Honolulu, Hawaii, *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Aug. 21, 1875. First in Hawaii?

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## Baseball Better Today Than It Was 25 Years Ago!

An article titled “An Old Genevan Sees a Big Game” in the Geneva (NY) Advertiser, July 20, 1886, bucks stereotypes by saying the game was better in 1886 than it was in 1861. He adds some suggestions on umpiring that MLB might well have listened to.

The letter writer, G. H. S., admits that in 1861 he was “President of the best club, and Captain of the best nine in Madison County [New York].” He went to see a game in Philadelphia between the MLB Detroit and Philadelphia clubs, and had this to say:

“one of the chief improvements to the game, that I observed, in looking back to 1861, was the greater accuracy with which the ball is thrown in from the field to the basemen, and from catcher to bases than formerly. But errors and muffs still prevail, and wil always, I presume. Umpiring, too, remains imperfect, and while the umpire stands, as did the one I saw, transfixed in one place, errors in decisions will be inevitable. The idea suggested itself to my mind, that if the umpire had *three* assistants, stationed near the bases, on whom he could rely for information, more accurate decisions would ensue...”

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## Early Ad for Baseball Emporium



From the *New England Base Ballist*, Sept. 17, 1868

## Latest Protoball Additions

**Total numbers**—As of Dec. 14, 2023, the Protoball **Pre-Pro (pre-1871) Database** contained 12,393 clubs and 4,071 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, 330 clubs and 25 ballgames have been added.

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

For the so-called “**predecessor**” **games** such as townball and cricket, there are 657 U.S. entries. Since the last newsletter, 3 such games/clubs have been added. The “**Glossary of Games**” includes 328 predecessor and derivative bat-ball games. The “**Chronology**” has 2,067 entries.

300 early U.S. **baseball fields** are described, including baseball fields in all 50 states. Since the last newsletter, 0 fields have been added.

**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.

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## Finds of the Month

**Glossary of Games Entries for Round Ball.** The glossary entry for Round Ball has been strengthened by new-found entries for various locations in New England prior to 1855, and a notice from the *New England Base Ballist*, Oct. 8, 1868.

**Old Baseball Journals:** Not a find, per se, but Bruce Allardice, co-editor of this Newsletter, has obtained scans of 147 issues (a nearly complete run) of four well-known weekly sports/baseball journals from 1867-1869, the *New England Base Ballist* (22 issues, Aug. 6, 1868 to Dec. 31, 1868), the *National Chronicle* (the *NEBB*'s successor, 65 issues, Jan. 9, 1869 to June 18, 1870), the *Ball Players Chronicle* (30 issues, June 6 to Dec. 26, 1867) and the *American Chronicle of Sprots and Pastimes* (30 issues, Jan. 6 to July 23, 1868).

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## Research Requests

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

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

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## BULLETIN BOARD

The **19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Committee Speakers Series** has the following presentations lined up for online viewing:

Dec. 12, 2023: Gregory Wolf on “Bill Hutchison, A Forgotten Star”

Jan. 9, 2024: Tom Gilbert on “Amateurism, True Crime, and Baseball”

Feb. 13: Matt Albertson on “The Scorecard Vote: A Fans View of the 1895 Philadelphia Phillies”

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”

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

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**John Thorn’s** always excellent *Our Games* blog has a Sept. 4th article on Henry Chadwick, pioneer baseball reporter and statistician, who is in Baseball’s Hall of Fame. John is careful to point out that Chadwick was NOT the first baseball reporter. See <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/pioneers-henry-chadwick-1afeb3281bc9>

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The **Frederick Ivor Campbell 2024 Conference** (the “Fred,” April 19-20<sup>th</sup> 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.”

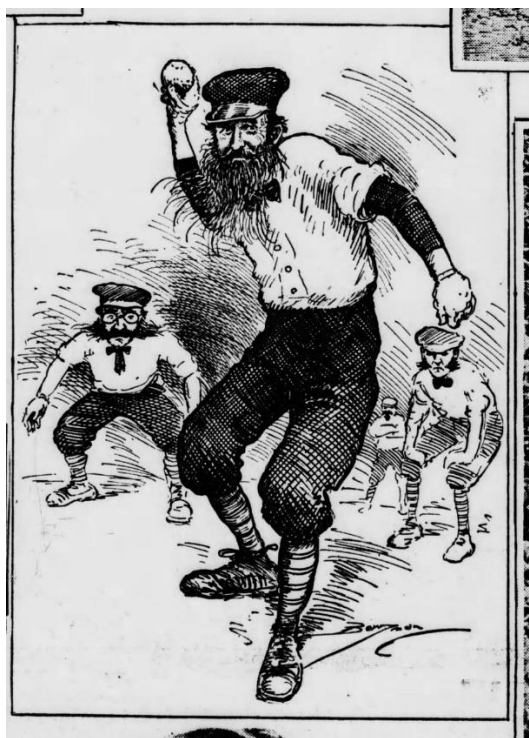
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SABR has just put the entire Rucker archive of baseball photos/images online in a searchable database. This collection of 40,000 images is mostly modern era, but includes a number of pre-1871 images that would be of interest to Origins/Pre Pro researchers. This editor’s search for “1865” turned up images of an 1865 ballgame on Boston Common, several team photos of the Haymakers of Lansingburgh, and an 1860s pennant of the Philadelphia Keystone Base Ball Club. Visit [https://sabr.org/?s=1870&post\\_type%5Bsabr-rucker-archive%5D=sabr-rucker-archive](https://sabr.org/?s=1870&post_type%5Bsabr-rucker-archive%5D=sabr-rucker-archive) for a direct link to the archive search feature. Click on the “advanced search” feature.

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The *Handbook of Texas* has published **Doug Perkins**’ excellent article on the Union Baseball Club of Matamoros, Mexico, which flourished 1868-69, and its connection to Seton Hall University. See <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/latin-american-baseball-origins>

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The Washington DC Evening Star, Aug. 14, 1927