

# NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES

FALL 2020

SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

Nineteenth Century Notes is a publication of the Nineteenth Century Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research

## Peter Mancuso Receives Bob Davids Award

### Committee Contacts

Chairman- Peter Mancuso  
6970 Ely Road  
New Hope, PA 18938  
peterplus4@earthlink.net

Editor/VC- Bob Bailey  
10223 SW 49th Lane  
Gainesville, FL 32608  
bobbailey@cox.net

Follow the Nineteenth Century Committee on Facebook at @SABR19thCC.

Copyright © Society for American Baseball Research 2020

Casey At the Bat Origin? 4-5

Noteworthy Events in the Otherwise Forgettable Career of John Connor 6-8

Baseball, Boston and Higher Education 9-11

News & Notes 11-12

**N**ineteenth Century Committee Chairman Peter Mancuso received the Bob Davids Award at the SABR Annual Meeting held online in July.

The Bob Davids Award, named for SABR's Founder, is the organization's highest honor present to individual whose contributions to SABR reflect the ingenuity, integrity, and self-sacrifice of SABR's Founder.

Peter has been a member of SABR since the 1990s and assumed the



Peter Mancuso

Chairmanship of the Nineteenth Century Committee in 2007.

When he assumed the position of chairman activities of the Committee were at a low ebb and there was not much enthusiasm for Committee

projects.

Since that time he has reestablished the Nineteenth Century Committee as one of SABR's most productive and most active groups.

Under Peter's stewardship the committee has provided research, writing and editorial oversight to a number of SABR-related publications. In 2013 Inventing Baseball: The 100 Greatest Games of the Nineteenth Century was issued. In addition to pushing the project forward

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Chairman's Corner by Peter Mancuso

**T**he 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Conference (The Fred), as most of you know, was rescheduled with all presenters and attendees intact from its original 2020 dates to the corresponding Friday and Saturday

in 2021, April 23 & 24<sup>th</sup>.

The big question we all face now is whether the virus will allow us to have a "normal" Fred conference at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown as we prefer.

Although, the program is set, in October we will contact all our presenters asking if they are able to

present their portion of the program virtually.

If we are able to construct a fully virtual Fred conference, we will begin to calculate how much to refund each registrant and guest (all of the fees that were paid for the: Welcoming Dinner; Post Conference Buffet; Satur-

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Peter Mancuso Receives Bob Davids Award (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Peter contributed six essays to the book.

He provided committee support for the two volumes on the pre-1871 teams and their players, *Base Ball Pioneers: 1850-1870* and *Base Ball Founders: The Clubs, Players and cities of the Northeast That Established the Game. These volumes were issued in 2012 and 2013.* Peter also began the development of *Base Ball's 19th Century "Winter" Meetings: 1857-1900* issued by SABR in 2018.

Under his watch the Nineteenth Century Committee has also established two conferences that present research into the game during that period. In 2009 the Fred Ivor-Campbell Conference (named for a former Nineteenth Century Committee Chairman) was started and has met annual since (except for 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic caused the conference to be rescheduled. The conference has meet annual at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown and is next scheduled for April 23-24, 2021.

This conference sells-out every year and has over 100 research presentations, panels, and interviews over its 11 year run so far.

In 2014 Peter organized the first Nineteenth Century Interdisciplinary Conference in New York City. This is an effort to provide a conference that would meet in different cities and provide presentations and panels that included academic and researchers outside SABR in addition to local SABR members research presentations. Since the 2014 NYC Conference to meeting has met in Philadelphia (2016), Cleveland (2018), and Minneap-

olis (2019). The next conference is scheduled for Brooklyn in 2021.

The Nineteenth Century Committee has inaugurated two annual activities under Peter's chairman-



Peter Mancuso and his wife Camille

ship. In 2009 the Committee began selecting the Nineteenth Century Overlooked Legend. This was an effort to recognize stand-out players from the period who had become a dim memory over the century since any of them had played a game. There has been a selection every year since 2009 when Pete Browning was the first player selected. Since the beginning of the program 12 individuals have been named with Deacon White (the 2010 selection) being named to the Hall of Fame in

2013. The program now gives all SABR members the opportunity to participate in the selection.

The other on-going activity is the Nineteenth Century Grave Marker Project. The leaders of the project research the burial locations of significant individuals in 19th century baseball to discover any that lie in unmarked graves. Since 2016 new stones have been placed on the graves of James White Davis, Andy Leonard, Pud Galvin, Bob Caruthers, and Hicks Hayhurst.

Through Peter's efforts the Nineteenth Century Committee is a vibrant and productive part of SABR's host of Research Committees.

Peter Mancuso (unfortunately no relation to Gus and Frank Mancuso) is a Staten Island, NY native who grew up a Brooklyn Dodger fan before joining the New York Police Department where he served as an officer and Assistant Director of Training before retiring. He was also a partner in Mancuso Show Management, a company that operated quilt shows, antique shows, and antiquarian book fairs.

His selection to receive the Bob Davids award in 2020 makes three consecutive years that a member of the Committee was chosen for this honor. Previously Bill Lamb and Larry McCray were recipients of this recognition.



## Chairman's Corner (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

day Luncheon and the costs for both days' continental breakfasts and refreshment breaks). This would leave only a nominal fee already paid by each registrant for the conference itself. In November we will contact each registrant and provide them with complete details and options. Our goal is a finalized plan, live or virtual, by January 1, 2021.

**The 19cBB Speakers Series** (Monthly and Virtual) is an initiative by or Vice Chair, **Bob Bailey** that will run from this October thru May, on the second Tuesday of each month via the SABR Zoom Meeting connection at 8:00PM E.T. for one hour. The first six presenters are: Oct.13 **Jon Popovich**; Nov.10 **Joanne Hulbert**; Dec.8 **Bill Humber**; Jan.12 **Tom Shieber**; Feb.9 **Don Jensen** and Mar.9 **Jerry Casway**. April's

and May's presenters will be announced soon. Topics and other program details can be found on the SABR website. One week prior to each presentation all Nineteenth Century Committee Members will be sent a group email reminder of the following week's presentation. Then, the day before each presentation, we will send another group email with the link to the Zoom Meeting. Each presentation will run 30-40 minutes.

**The Brooklyn 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Interdisciplinary Symposium** scheduled for this November with **St. Francis College** (our Symposium's sponsoring partner) at their downtown campus in Historic Brooklyn Heights has been rescheduled to **Saturday, November 13, 2021** (with an optional Sunday, late morning-early afternoon mini bus tour of historic baseball sites in Brooklyn). Watch

for details on this, our sixth city-specific symposium during Spring, 2021.

**The 2020 Chairman's Award Winners**, were announced during our Virtual Annual Business Meeting: **John Thorn** was recognized for co-founding our Committee some 37 years ago and for being a panel moderator for 10 of our 11 Fred Conferences, he was a panelist and keynote speaker at our first Fred and will be the Keynote at our 12<sup>th</sup> and, has been a moderator or a speaker at our first five Symposiums. **Bob Tholkes** was recognized for being the "Mover and Shaker" that brought our 2019 Symposium to Minneapolis, and for being a panelist at past Freds.

**Think of it as a Rain Delay,**

Peter, "...because baseball history is not only baseball history."



# Casey At The Bat Origin?

by Frank Vaccaro

I came across the Washington Post's report of a post-season exhibition game printed Thursday, October 7, 1880. It struck me as a possible "inspiration" for Ernest Thayer's "Casey at the Bat". How and why a pre-cursor of this poem could appear in Washington eight years before the poem's accepted debut in California, we will discuss. Thayer was a seventeen-year-old living in Worcester, MA, at that time.

At the very least, it's an interesting game report, quite different from all the other game reports from the era that I've seen, and I hope it brings some enjoyment to readers one-hundred and forty years later.

The game was played between the Cleveland Nationals, who just finished their regular season, and the Washingtons, who had been adrift for about one month since the dissolution of the National Association.

The game finished a five-inning 2-2 tie, and the drama occurred in the bottom of the fifth inning, as darkness was settling in, with Washington trailing 1-2. Fans would have known that the bottom of the fifth would be Washington's last at bat.

Here's the game report, word for word, run on sentences and all:

"The fifth aroused an enthusiasm that has not been seen on the ball ground for many a day. McClellan led off with a sharp hit to Dunlap, who fumbled it, and then Mac showed some magnificent base running. Starting for second on the first ball pitched to Mansell, he secured it by a terrific slide, head first, covering himself with dust and glory, and scarcely had the applause subsided, when, Gilligan allowing the ball to pass him a few feet, Mac

went for third, which he reached in the same manner and came up



George Derby

dirtier and more glorious than ever, but utterly oblivious of both, and only intent upon getting in his run. Mansell went out on a fly to left, and Derby stepped to the plate with a resolute look upon his face, which made everybody hope for one of his old time game winning hits, and George was equal to the emergency. In the hush that fell upon the audience the umpire's voice sounded very clear and distinct as he said 'one strike,' and then 'two strikes,' while faces began to get long, when Derby met the ball square in the face, and away it went for two bases, McClellan coming home amid the yells of the audience. George went to third on a passed ball, and then Powell sent a hot liner square at McGeary, who took it handsomely, and, beating Derby to the bag, put the side out."

This game report displays eleven elements that can be found in Ernest Thayer's poem "Casey at the Bat."

There is the old Alan Levy argument that Philly pitcher Daniel Casey was the inspiration for Casey at the Bat. The Alan Levy argument was, I believe, actually the argument of Daniel Casey himself, and then that of his widow who, I recall, died in the 1960's.

It's likely we will never be able to state with any certainty whether the WashPost game report was the inspiration without some "smoking gun" piece of evidence such as a letter by Thayer, or someone in his inner circle, mentioning "an old Washington Post game report", etc. Are there any Ernest Thayer biographers out there?

However, we can state that while no inspiration has been found, a few elements popped up in the game report of a single game played late in 1880. These elements divide into two groups: matching basic game conditions, and, matching atypical references.

Matching basic game conditions include: 1) Home team down to final at bat. 2) Tying run on base. 3) Slugger makes the final out. 4) Home team does not win.

Matching atypical references include: 1) Reference to slugger with reputation as next at bat. 2) Reference to the umpire's calling of "Strike one" and "Strike two". 3) Use of word "hope" for crowd's reaction to slugger. 4) Reference to the confident mental state of the slugger. 5) Reference to crowd's enthusiasm surpassing memory of such. 6) Reference to the crowd becoming quiet at the suspense.

There's also a rhythm element of the WashPost game report. If you try reading the game report as

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Casey At The Bat Origin? (cont.)

*(Continued from page 4)*

a poem, or bedtime story, in your best deep DeWolf Hopper imitation, you'll find it works, albeit not as good as "Casey at the Bat".

Regarding pitcher Dan Casey, it's likely he did strike out to end a loss, perhaps several times in his career, with the tying or winning runs on base. Levy claims "with the bases loaded" but in Casey at the Bat there are only runners on second and third. This does not disqualify the pitcher as a possible inspiration for the poem, but it is curious why Levy cites this condition. Casey pitched primarily in the National League from 1885 to 1889.

According to links found on poemhunter.com, Ernest Thayer's whereabouts seem to be:

1863-1870 Lawrence, MA  
 1871-1882 Worcester, MA  
 1882-1885 Boston, MA at Harvard (1881-1885 if four year study)  
 1885-1885 Tour of Europe  
 1885-1888 San Francisco, CA  
 1888-1895 New York, NY  
 1895-1912 Worcester, MA  
 1912-1940 Santa Barbara, CA

Casey's first NL start occurred June 25, 1885 which would have been after Harvard's graduation.

Casey's first east coast start was July 21, 1885. Was Thayer in Europe then? But Casey, as has been pointed out, was not a slugger. Additionally, why would the name "Casey" have a real connection while "Cooney", "Barrows", "Flynn", and "Blake" - other names from the poem - do not? It's difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to see if Thayer's life intersected with a game in which Daniel Casey struck out under the basic game conditions listed above.

We do know Thayer schooled at

Harvard from either 1881 or 1882. He worked for the Harvard Lampoon, eventually becoming editor. Is it possible that Thayer came across this game report in the offices of the Harvard Lampoon? This raises the question of why a Washington game report from 1880 would find its way so far north. One answer, surprisingly, is that the Washington team actually had a fan base in Massachusetts in 1880.

As National Association teams disbanded that season, and the National Association itself teetered before eventually collapsing, the Washington team transferred all of their home games to Springfield, MA, for 24 days: from July 9, 1880 to August 2. Springfield is forty miles west of Worcester, and Worcester is forty miles west of Boston. The question is, when the Washington team returned to Washington in August, did any newspaper clippings about the team get sent to Washington-hungry fans in Massachusetts? Did any clippings make their way into the editorial offices of the Harvard Lampoon?

I don't have the answer to that. But it is not that far-fetched a proposition. Which brings us back to the WashPost game report itself. Standing alone it's very interesting. If ANY other game reports from ANY other newspaper, 1875 to 1888, have ANY of the eleven elements listed above - even semi-pro and town team game reports from small newspapers in small towns - then let's put them on the table. Until that happens, the October 7, 1880 Washington Post contains an "interesting" published narra-

tive that pre-dates "Casey at the Bat" with some of the poem's elements and structure.

That's all.

But we can also have some fun! If it is the inspiration for "Casey at Bat," we can identify the players listed in the poem. "Sneering Casey" would be George Derby, the "writhing" pitcher would be Frank Hankinson, the unnamed umpire to be killed would be Kipp, presumably a Washington resident or Washington area semi-pro player. The lineups match as follows:

Mudville Washington (very apropos!)

Flynn: Bill McClellan, ss  
 Burke: Mike Mansell, lf  
 Casey: George Derby, rf  
 Martin Powell, 1b  
 Pop Snyder, 3b  
 Phil Baker, cf  
 Joe Gerhardt, 2b  
 Cooney: Sam Trott, c  
 Barrow: Jack Lynch, p

Cleveland, the victorious Mudville opponents, line up as follows:

p Frank Hankinson  
 c Barney Gilligan  
 1b Bill Phillips  
 2b Fred Dunlap  
 ss Jack Glasscock  
 3b Mike McGeary  
 lf Doc Kennedy  
 cf Pete Hotaling  
 rf Orator Shaffer

The play-by-play doesn't match up. In the poem we have: groundout, groundout, single, double, strike-out. In the game we have: reached on error, flyout, double, lineout into double-play. In the poem Casey makes the final out on strikes, in the game Derby makes the final out tagged off third base.

# Noteworthy Events in the Otherwise Forgettable Career of Mid-1880s Pitcher John Connor

by Bill Lamb

Like a host of other marginal talents, pitcher John Connor owes his place in major league player ranks largely to the proliferation of clubs accorded major league status during the 1884 season. At one time or other that year, no fewer than 33 different organizations claimed a National League, American Association, or Union Association franchise. Predictably, Connor's stay in the bigs was relatively brief – but not entirely without interest or modest distinction. Connor, for example, spent most of the 1884 campaign as the hurling mainstay of the Boston Blues, a reserve nine owned and operated by the defending National League champion Boston club. The Blues played in the Massachusetts State League and were probably major league baseball's first farm team. Thereafter, Connor's major league work consisted of 12 starting assignments for three different ball clubs: all complete games. Unhappily for the hurler, only two of these efforts ended in victory.

Last but likely most significant, Connor and \$750 cash were sent by the AA Louisville Colonels to the Chattanooga Lookouts of the minor Southern League in late-August 1885. In return, Louisville received hard-throwing pitching prospect Tom (Toad) Ramsey from Chattanooga. Although other instances of player transfer preceded the deal, 19<sup>th</sup> century baseball historian David Ball and others consider the Connor-for-Ramsey swap the first straight player trade ever consum-

mated in professional baseball.

An account of the life and noteworthy events in the otherwise forgettable playing career of John Connor follows.

Unrelated to 19<sup>th</sup> century Hall of Famer Roger Connor, our subject was born sometime during July 1861 in Nashua, New Hampshire, a fast-growing com-



John Connor

merce hub located some 45 miles northwest of Boston. John was the second of four children born to common laborer Hugh Connor (1835-c.1913) and his wife, the former Hannah (Honora) Cahill (1832-1904), both Irish-Catholic immigrants. The Connors were among the new arrivals attracted to the employment opportunities provided

by Nashua's burgeoning mills, factories, and metal foundries. From the time of the family's arrival in the late-1850s to the turn of the century, the city's population quadrupled to over 40,000. In the beginning, Hugh Connor bounced between jobs before settling in as an iron molder at a locomotive assembly plant. By 1880, his sons Dennis and John had found work in local shoemaking factories, as would their younger sister Mary a few years later.

Little is known about the early life of John Connor, but he presumably followed the sandlot-to-semipro-to-professional ballplayer path blazed by outfielder Bill Hawes, the first Nashua native to reach the major leagues (with Boston in 1879). In spring 1884, Connor was among the playing hopefuls collected by the powerhouse Boston club, the NL reigning champions. With pitching duties in the capable hands of returning aces Jim Whitney and Charlie Buffinton, the champs had little immediate need of the likes of the 22-year-old Connor. But signing him, and fellow prospects like Jim Manning, Tom Gunning, Bill Annis, and Gene Moriarty, served a dual purpose. In the first instance, these signings allowed NL Boston to staff the Boston Blues, a newly-created reserve nine that would provide the big club with replacements on an as-needed basis as the 1884 season progressed. Probably more important to club management, placing Connor and the

*(Continued on page 7)*

## John Connor (cont.)

others under contract shrank the pool of area playing talent available to the rival Boston Reds, the local entry in the upstart Union Association.

Apart from good size (6'1", 170 lb.) and a strong (officially listed as unknown but presumptively right-handed) throwing arm, young Connor was a raw talent who never developed into much of a batsman or fielder. And his first foray pitching against top-notch opposition exposed his shortcomings as a hurler.

Facing only a rising underhand fastball and a rudimentary curve, the Boston varsity feasted on Connor's serves, shelling him for 31 runs (15 earned) in an early April intra-squad game between regulars and reserves. Six days later, Connor was again hammered by the Boston regulars, surrendering 16 runs in six innings-pitched, but mostly undone by the 22 fielding errors committed behind him and reliever Jim Burke in a 28-2 intra-squad laugh. Soon thereafter, Connor was consigned to the Blues outfield, with Burke taking over as the everyday pitcher for the reserve nine.

That changed when Burke jumped to the UA Boston Reds in early May. Returned to the box, Connors quickly found form, emerging as the best pitcher in the Massachusetts State League, the independent minor circuit that Boston management had entered the Blues into. On July 22, Boston manager-first baseman John Morrill promoted the reserve battery of Connor and catcher Tom Gun-

ning for an NL Boston exhibition game to be played in Portland, Maine. The locals proved a poor test, registering only three-hits off Connor while striking out 13 times – notwithstanding the fact that youngster visibly eased up on them in the later innings. The final score: Boston 29, Portland, 3. Sufficiently impressed by their performance, Morrill decided to give his reserve battery another tryout a few days later, but against more formidable opposition: the National League New York Gothams (later Giants). On July 26, 1884, Connor and Gunning made their major league debuts and the outcome, in the estimation of *Sporting Life*, was “disastrous.” Nervous and wild, Connor surrendered four walks and three base-hits in the opening frame to fall behind 5-0. Thereafter, he “pitched in better form but was poorly supported” by batterymate Gunning, charged with six passed balls, and a miscue-prone Boston defense (seven errors). By game's end, New York had touched Connor for 15 hits, but only three earned runs, in a 12-3 drubbing.

Following his lackluster performance against New York, Connor returned to the Blues and pitched the club to the Massachusetts State League title, posting the majority of the champs 48 victories. But Connor was not around for the Blues finish, having been recalled by Boston in mid-September. Shoulder problems, likely the toll of throwing nearly 1,500 innings over the previous three seasons, sidelined Jim Whitney and necessitated Boston's resort to Connor and diminutive right-hander Daisy Davis in the

attempt to stay in the pennant chase. Neither recruit proved up to the task. In Connor's return engagement, 11 Boston fielding errors, including four by Connor himself, cost him a 5-3 loss to Detroit. Five days later, Connor held Cleveland scoreless through eight innings, but weakened in the ninth to drop a well-pitched 3-0 decision. Days later, he turned the tables on Cleveland to notch his maiden major leagues win, hanging on for a 7-6 triumph on October 3. By now, however, Boston had fallen hopelessly behind the front-running Providence Grays, riding Hoss Radbourn's record-setting 60-win season to the 1884 National League crown. (Some sources credit Radbourn with 59 wins in 1884). In meaningless mid-October games, Connor hurled three complete games against Buffalo. The final result: two ties and a season-ending 9-8 loss to the Bison.

In the end, Boston, hand-capped by the 1-3 logs posted down the stretch by both Connor and Davis, finished 73-38 (.658) and a distant second to Providence (84-28, .750). Overall, Connor had gone 1-4, completing all seven of his starting assignments. Over 60 innings-pitched, he allowed a generous 70 base-hits, but nevertheless posted a respectable 3.15 ERA. His strikeout (29) to walk (18) ratio was also tolerable. But as a batsman, Connor had been near-helpless, going 2-for-25 (.080 BA), with 13 whiffs. Still, he had shown just enough to be included in the contingent that Boston

*(Continued on page 8)*

## John Connor (cont.)

fielded for post-season exhibition game play. And Boston newspapers predicted his return to the Boston club for the 1885 season. But it was not to be, and over the winter Connor signed with Buffalo.

Connor's regular season tenure with his new club started and finished on May 30, 1885. As per usual, he went the distance in a 9-4 loss to New York, but was raked for 14 hits and botched three of his fielding chances. Shortly thereafter, he was released. Connor's final major league stop came in a rival circuit, the American Association. He got off to a rocky start with the Louisville Colonels, reached for 17 hits in a -4 defeat by Pittsburgh suffered on August 24. Five days later, John Connor tossed a complete game 12-3 loss to the Cincinnati Reds on June 23. Connor was better in his next outing, holding Brooklyn to five hits, only to have walked baserunners provide the difference in a 4-3 defeat. Finally on August 2, Connor registered his second major league victory, a five-hit, nine-strikeout win over Pittsburgh, 4-1. It would prove his last. Indeed, Connor had only one more major league game left to pitch: and he assumed his modest place in baseball annals. He became the first big leagues player ever traded to another club.

On August 29, 1885, Louisville sent Connor and \$750 cash to the Chattanooga Lookouts of the minor Southern League. In return, the Colonels received young lefty fireballer Toad Ramsey from Chattanooga. Although

there are other contenders for the distinction, early baseball scholar David Ball and others assert that the Connor-for-Ramsey exchange constitutes the first player trade in professional baseball history.

Although only 23-years-old, John Connor's major league career was now behind him. In 12 games total, he had gone 2-8 (with two tie games), with a 3.81 ERA. Noteworthy is the fact that Connor recorded a complete game in every major league contest he ever appeared in. During those outings, he struck out 48 enemy batsmen, walked 32. But his hits-allowed (127) to innings-pitched (104) ratio was among the highest registered for major league hurlers during the 1884-1885 seasons. And Connor was a woeful performer as a hitter, going a career 4-for-42 (.095 BA) with two RBIs, and a lousy fielder. Connor made an impressive debut with Chattanooga, but suffered a hard-luck, ten-inning 1-0 loss to Augusta on September 1. He never got another chance to show his stuff to Southern League fans, as the Chattanooga club disbanded days later. Connor began the following year with the Rochester Maroons of the International Association, but was dropped from the club roster after two April losses. Nineteenth century baseball historian David Nemecek also places Connor with the Brockton (Connecticut) club in the New England League early in the 1886 season. His last reported affiliation involved mid-summer pitching duty for a Boston semi-

pro team called the Belfasts. Thereafter, Connor returned home to Nashua, his professional ballplaying career completed as far as has been discovered.

Connor spent the remainder of his life living with his parents and spinster sister Mary in the family residence on Tyler Street. By 1889, he and a local acquaintance were the proprietors of Connor & Corcoran, a downtown Nashua saloon. Connor maintained the business until his health began to fail. He died in the Connor family residence on November 14, 1905, a victim of paresis, the end-stage of syphilis likely contracted sometime during his baseball playing years. The deceased was 44. Following a Funeral Mass said at Immaculate Conception Church in Nashua, his remains were interred in Catholic (now St. Patrick's) Cemetery in nearby Hudson, New Hampshire. Never married and without children, John Connor's only immediate survivors were father Hugh and sister Mary.



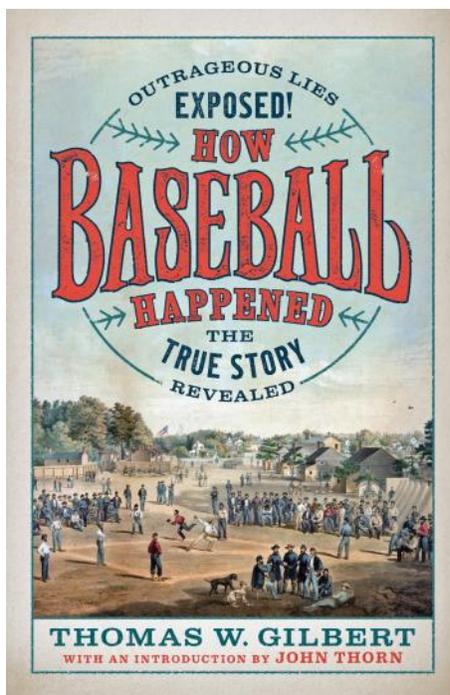
# Baseball, Boston and Higher Education by Tom Gilbert

Editor's Note— The following is an excerpt from Chapter 7 of the recently released *How Baseball Happened* by Thomas W. Gilbert. Ordering information can be found in News & Notes on page 11.

In the 19th century, as in the 21st, you couldn't swing a bat in Boston without hitting a student. High school, prep school and college students were in the thick of the sports and baseball movements. Schools helped spread baseball for several reasons. Students tend to be forward-looking. Schools encourage physical education and sponsor sports clubs. Naturally, the first schools and colleges to play baseball were in New York City. As we know, Columbia College and baseball go way back. Founded by Townsend Harris in 1847, City College, then called the Free Academy, had student baseball clubs well before the Civil War. The Catholic St. John's College in the Bronx -- now Fordham -- had baseball clubs in the late 1850s. In 1866 two Cuban Fordham varsity players, Esteban Bellan and a teammate named Cristodoro, were recruited by the national champion Unions of Morrisania; Bellan later played for the Unions of Lansingburgh, AKA the Troy Haymakers, along with another Cuban Fordham graduate, Rafael de la Rúa. These sons of the Cuban bourgeoisie were the earliest Latinos to play baseball at a high level. Bellan played a couple of seasons of professional baseball before returning in 1874 to Cuba, where he played and managed in the first baseball leagues and is remembered today as a founding father of Cuban baseball. The New York schools were followed by

prep schools and colleges throughout the Northeast that prosperous New Yorkers sent their sons to. Yale had informal baseball clubs in the late 1850s.

In Boston, baseball and higher education were particularly intimate. In the 1860s, the Boston equivalent of Brooklyn versus New York City was the town and gown rivalry between the Lowells and Harvard. This rivalry was so



intense that when Lowells star Gerrit Miller went to Harvard as a student, he refused to play against his old club. In 1864 John Lowell offered a trophy silver ball to be competed for by the Boston clubs. In 1867 it was retired and melted down because clubs were trying so hard to win it that things got ugly. The Lowells once won the ball on a forfeit by challenging Harvard when the students were home on an academic break. The final score was the Lowells eight

silver balls, Harvard four and the Tri-Mountains three. In head to head silver ball games with the Lowells, Harvard won, 4-3. Most members of the Lowells had grown up in the West End. The Boston Common and the not yet landscaped Public Garden were their childhood playgrounds. Some of the Lowells went on to Harvard, but when they were founded in 1861, they were a junior club made up of students from Phelps', Dixwells', Boston Latin and other Boston secondary schools. Two of the Lowells' most important players were Mort Rogers and Gerrit Miller. Both were New Yorkers.

Born in Brooklyn around 1845, Mortimer Rogers was playing for the Resolutes in 1865 when he made friends with some of the Lowells who were visiting New York. Later that year, he moved to Boston and joined the club. Although a good hitter and "the best center fielder in New England," Rogers looked at amateur baseball and saw a business opportunity. Over the next five years, Rogers served as vice president, secretary and treasurer of the NABBP. In 1868 he started the first baseball-centered weekly, the *New England Base Ballist*. At the 1869 NABBP convention, which was held in Boston to promote the game there, Rogers's paper, now called the *National Chronicle*, was named the official newspaper of the NABBP. In 1871 Rogers began selling his new invention, "baseball photographic cards," at ballparks across the country. Printed scorecards that featured numbered

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Baseball, Boston & Higher Education (cont.)

*(Continued from page 9)*

photographic portraits of baseball players, these were, depending on who you ask, the forerunners of the modern collectible baseball card.

Gerrit Smith Miller was a 16-year-old student at Dixwell's Private Latin School when he joined the Lowell club in 1861, its first season. Dixwell's school was near the present location of Emerson College at 20 Boylston Place. Dixwell's was about twenty steps from the Boston Common, where prep and high school boys got black eyes and muddy clothes playing various informal rugby-like games. While still at Dixwell's, Miller organized a club called the Oneidas, which played its own kind of football. The Oneidas' game is considered (also depending on who you ask) to be the direct ancestor of the game played by today's NFL. Yes, the father of American football was, arguably, a teenage baseball player. Tracing Gerrit Smith Miller's family background takes us to other interesting places, including upstate New York when it was a laboratory of social change and radical politics. Born in Peterboro, New York, near Syracuse, Miller was named after his grandfather Gerrit Smith, a 19th-century land reformer, station master on the Underground Railroad, Temperance activist and supporter of the vote for women. The phrase anti-slavery activist seems too mild for Smith. He was a co-conspirator in John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry, after which then-Senator Jefferson Davis demanded that Smith be hanged. African-American Abolitionist minister Henry Highland

Garnet once said, "There are two places where slaveholders cannot come, Heaven and Peterboro." Gerrit Smith was also a friend and sometime ally of ex-Chartist land reformer Thomas Ainge Devyr, the father of Brooklyn baseball star Tom Devyr. Gerrit Smith's daughter, and Gerrit Smith Miller's mother, Elizabeth Miller invented bloomers, the baggy pants worn as a political statement by 19th-century feminists, and co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association with her cousin Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

In the 19th-century, many feminists supported the American public health reform and sports movements. Stanton believed in physical education and athletics for women. So did Emma Willard, Mary Lyon and other founders of 19th-century women's seminaries that became women's colleges and encouraged sports and exercise. As Dr. Joseph B. Jones of the Brooklyn Excelsiors discovered [when he provoked a scandal by bringing in a trousers-wearing English feminist to teach gymnastics to women and girls in his Brooklyn gym], advocating exercise for women and girls could be politically risky, but all-female Vassar College had baseball clubs in the 1860s, as did Smith College in the 1870s. The first organized sport at Mt. Holyoke, the world's oldest continuously operating women's college, was baseball. In August of 1868 Thomas Fitzgerald, a founder and former president of the Athletics baseball club, ran the following story in his *City Item* newspaper.

At Peterboro, writes Mrs.

[Elizabeth] Cady Stanton, there is a baseball club of girls. Nannie Miller, a grand-daughter of Gerrit Smith, is the captain, and handles the bat with a grace and strength worthy of notice. It was a pretty sight to see the girls with their white dresses and blue ribbons flying, in full possession of the public square, while the boys were quiet spectators of the scene.

Nannie Miller, who grew up to be the well-known feminist Anne Fitzhugh Miller, was Gerrit Miller's sister.

In 1862, the Lowells helped a group of students from the class of 1866 of Harvard, their future archrivals, lay out a baseball diamond near the Washington Elm on Cambridge Common, and organize a baseball club. The roots of the Harvard club were in Phillips Exeter, a New Hampshire prep school attended by Harvard '66 students George Flagg and Frank Wright. As Wright recalled, during an especially dull Latin class, a classmate passed him a note suggesting they start a baseball club. "A majority of the fellows wished to form a club to play Massachusetts baseball...but a few of us who hailed from New York State carried the meeting in favor of the new game, then called the 'Brooklyn' game." Harvard had a head start on other American colleges, but a big reason why it dominated college baseball through the 1860s was its captain and star player from 1867-1871, Archie Bush. Bush's life story hits nearly all of the big

*(Continued on page 11)*

## Baseball, Boston & Higher Education (cont.)

*(Continued from page 10)*

themes of late Amateur Era baseball -- New York, the Civil War, student culture and the railroad. Born Archibald McClure Bush in 1846 in Albany, New York, he joined the army at 17 and served two years in the Civil War before entering the prep school Phillips Andover in 1864. After graduating from Harvard in 1871, he joined his father in the family business, manufacturing railroad cars at Troy, New York's Gilbert, Bush and Co. car works. When he was a freshman at Andover, Archie Bush; his cousin James McClure, who had played in the army; and James Wells, a member of Brooklyn's Active club, organized the school's first baseball club. Four players from the club went on to play for Yale and two for Harvard. Yale and Princeton formed varsity baseball clubs and

other colleges followed, among them Williams, Amherst, Brown and Wesleyan.

Colleges took baseball very seriously in the Amateur Era and it did not take them long to become competitive, with a little help from the odd non-student ringer.

They toured the East Coast and played top clubs like the Athletics, Atlantics and Excelsiors. In 1866 Williams was made fun of for hiring an unnamed baseball coach from New York City, but it was setting a trend. Hamilton College in upstate New York brought in Excelsiors second baseman George Flanley to consult on its baseball program; Harry Wright did the same for Harvard in 1871. Amazingly, the 1869 NABBP convention elected Archie Bush president while he was still a col-

lege undergraduate. Colleges and prep schools were fertile ground for baseball because, like the army during the Civil War, they mixed together young men who came from baseball playing parts of the country with young men who didn't. But they also spread the sport by sending their graduates back home or out into the world. The first great collegiate team, the Harvard Class of 1866 club, was the talk of Cambridge and Boston from 1863 to 1866. In July of 1866, a dozen or so young Cincinnatians, four of them 1866 graduates of Harvard Law School and one a member of Harvard College Class of 1867, decided to form a baseball club. This is how the Cincinnati Red Stockings began.

## News & Notes

**-The 2020 Overlooked 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Legend** was announced during our virtual Annual Business Meeting held on July 29<sup>th</sup>. The project Committee Co-Chairs, **Adam Darowski** and **Joe Williams** announced the full results of this year's SABRwide election, which resulted in the largest number of votes cast in the 11 year history of the project. This year's selection, **Bud Fowler** won by an impressive margin. Here is a link to the entire results and announcement: <https://sabr.org/latest/bud-fowler-sabr-overlooked-19th-century-baseball-legend-2020/>

-Back in mid August we sent out a group email announcing that SABR's new Editorial Board is seeking new research proposals for possible publication by SABR. Here is a link to that complete announcement which in turn provides links directly to SABR's Editorial Board, the Boards questionnaire for persons seeking publication by SABR and two samples of completed questionnaires for book publication.

<https://webmail.earthlink.net/wam/msg.jsp?msgid=82510&folder=INBOX&isSeen=false&x=-850756487>

Please, check out this announcement if you are considering authoring or editing a SABR publication as an individual or as being among a group of SABR colleagues. If you have a particular Nineteenth Century Committee publication in mind, please, contact Peter Manuso and/or Bob Bailey with your idea."

*(Continued on page 12)*

## News & Notes (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

-On a sad note, we pass along the news that Committee member John Popovich, Jr. died in early September. John was a regular attendee at the Fred for many years where he was always ready to en-



John and Jon Popovich  
in their bat vault

gage in 19th century baseball talk particularly in the area of vintage baseball equipment. He passed this

interest along to his son Jon who delivered several Fred presentations on the topic.

We will miss John at future Freds but he will be nearby as his wish for the disposition of his ashes was to have them scattered in Lake Glimmerglass (Otsego Lake) in Cooperstown.

-The book excerpt starting on page 9 is from Committee Member Tom Gilbert's new release *How Baseball Happened: Outrageous Lies Exposed! The True Story Can Now Be Told!*. By the time you receive this newsletter the book should be released by Godine, Publishers. To order the book go to <http://www.godine.com/book/how-baseball-happened/>.

-Christmas season will soon be upon us. It is a time of year when all folks of good cheer begin to think: "What can I get the Newsletter editor? It is a good question (in my humble opinion). To make it easy on everyone (what a kind fellow that editor is) just send him an article on some aspect of 19th Century history, players, teams, outrageousness, speculation, wishful thinking, remembrance of your childhood in 1882, proposed rule changes for the 19th century, or just about anything that has even a tangential connection to the period. I know the editor will be grateful. The Winter Newsletter will be issued about January 1, 2021 (aren't you glad 2020 is close to being in our rearview mirrors). Merry Christmas to one and all.

