

The Ball Player's Chronicle

"For the Glory of the Game!"

Newsletter of the Vintage Base Ball Association

AMONG THE CLUBS

The St. Croix of Stillwater (MN), sponsored by the Washington County Historical society, has reserved space at the county fairgrounds for their planned tournament, June 28-29, 2008, celebrating Minnesota's state sesquicentennial.

After a two-match sweep in June the Atlantics (Smithtown, NY) have the unusual distinction of being undefeated at the home field of the usually tough Roxbury Nine, having also swept two matches there in 2006.

Ants Move Game! One for the books was recorded when the New York Gothams were forced to move their June 16 matches with the Newtown Sandy Hooks (Newtown, CT) from Central Park's

North Meadow diamond to the Meadow's southwest corner by an infestation of ants...

SPOTLIGHT: THE ESSEX BASE BALL CLUB

Brian Sheehy sent the following in response to our invitation to "Spotlight" the Massachusetts nine in this issue of the *Chronicle*.

I'll start by saying the Essex Base Ball Organization is made up of three teams, the Essex Base Ball Club, the Lynn Live Oaks, and the Boston Beaneaters. Essex and Lynn play primarily 1861 rules while the Beaneaters play 1886 or overhand rules.

How did the club start?

The founding club is the

Essex Base Ball Club and it was organized in 2002 by the Danvers Historical Society and Essex National Heritage.

How did you find players?

Players are found through sending out press releases looking for players, picking up players at exhibitions we play. A lot of our events are in different communities and after people see us play they want to join, and finally, like most teams, once one guy joins so do his friends and in some cases family.

What was the toughest start-up problem?

The toughest thing about starting up is getting players to commit to playing. You may have 15 guys interested but when it comes time to play you may only have 8 guys. Through hard work and persistence you can get over that stuff, though.

What are the histories of the club names?

Essex Base Ball Club was a townball team that played in Essex County in the 1850's. The Lynn Live Oaks were a team that played in the 1870's; Candy Cummings played for them. The Boston Beaneaters are the National League club from the 1880s. I modeled the Beaneaters' uniforms after photos of Mike (King) Kelly.

Why do you play your particular years?

We play 1861 because most teams in New England do. We decided to start the 1886 team because that is popular now in New England and we have several players including myself who really enjoy it and who have been successful in our attempts to try it.

Financial support?

We basically get all of our money from dues or from donations at games. In the past we have had a few sponsors but overall the money comes from the players. We are in the process of declaring ourselves a non profit so

hopefully we will start applying for grants soon.

What do you like about the sport?

I like the history of the sport. It is interesting to see some of the quirky rules that an 1861 game has (the one bounce rule, for instance) and learn why the rule was eventually changed. I think that what we do is really cool because it really exposes fans/people to baseball history. I thought that I knew a lot about baseball history before I started playing but once I started reading about the 19th century game I found that there was a lot I didn't know.

LOOKING THE PART

*Advice on
equipment,
conduct and dress
for maintaining
that 1860 look, by
Jim Tootle, Ohio
Village Muffins.*

1. Players and other participants should arrive at the bench area fully dressed in period attire.

2. Family members, friends, and others not in period dress should not be

on the field or at the bench area before, during, or immediately after the game.

3. Players and other participants in period clothing should remain in full uniform until returning to the changing room or parking area. Spectators should not see them in partial dress or changing. If spectators are invited to come on the field to strike the ball and run the bases, participants' family members, friends, and others not in period dress may also enter the bench area and playing field.

4. Shoes: Players wore both smooth-soled and cleated shoes. It is difficult to find a reasonably-priced replica shoe, so we have had to compromise in this area. To avoid calling attention to our shoes, they should be completely black, with no trace of modern logos. Rubber cleats are generally permitted. If metal cleats are to be worn, both teams should have agreed on their use.

5. Bats: All bats used in a vintage game should be representative of the bats used in the period

portrayed. Players in the 1850s and 1860s would not have used batting gloves or pine tar. Reasonably priced 19th century bats can be easily obtained. Players should not use modern bats even with the logo or trademark covered or erased.

6. Benches: Period photos and illustrations usually do not show bench areas for players. They are usually standing or sitting on the ground. Most clubs have benches so that players are seated and do not block the spectators' view. Benches also help define the field and keep spectators from getting too close. Benches should be wooden; bales of straw are also used.

7. Bench articles: Participants need to be mindful not to bring modern items to the bench. Players in the 1860s did not wear sunglasses or wrist watches, would not have had vinyl gym bags, plastic water bottles, sports drink containers, or aluminum cans. They would not have had car keys, cell phones, or any other electronic equipment. Stow modern items in a

bag or basket of canvas, leather, wood, wicker, or straw.

8. Consuming water is encouraged. Any water supply on the bench should be in a metal bucket crockery container, and drinking cups should be tin. Keep any plastic containers out of sight away from the bench.

Keeping the Score

by Billy Pollifrone

Many modern baseball and even some die hard vintage base ball fans enjoy keeping score. Every match needs at least one official scorer. I've seen many different people scoring games and it seems everyone has their own unique symbols and systems. Most use the modern form of scoring, at least partially. What would we be doing had we been scoring in the 1860's? Would it resemble today? In this article, I will examine the similarities and differences between modern scoring and scoring in 1864. I could have easily chosen another year, but the

program I am a part of (Genesee Country Village, Rochester, NY) plays 1864. Also, keep in mind Henry Chadwick edited the source material I've referenced and developed the box score, so this was probably the recommended way to keep score at the time.

Most baseball fans know the numbered positions on the field, starting with the pitcher (1), the catcher (2), and continuing through to the right fielder (9). When the fielder puts out the batter or a base runner, we use that number to record who made the play or multiple numbers when more than one fielder is involved in making the play. We have abbreviations to track whether hits were singles or were for extra bases. There are even symbols for events like wild pitches, sacrifices and fielder's choices. Everything that happens can be properly recorded.

A score book from 1864, such as in *Beadle's Dime Base Ball Player*, tracks outs, who was involved in making the outs, and who scored runs. It seems pretty much the same as a

modern score book until we take a closer look. 1 TD 3? It means that Smith foul tipped to Leggett, the catcher, for the 3rd out of the inning. Why the number one when O'Brien is the pitcher? The difference in recording the outs is that the number used is not the position, like we have now, but rather the order they appear in the lineup. Later in the game, the pitcher could be swapped defensively for the right fielder, and the numbers used to record their play in the field would remain constant. Also obvious is that the scoring is only a dot, except for the home run which signified that the runner made all 4 bases at once. It's not possible to tell if the other runs scored were from hits that were singles or who batted in which runner. It does tell the most important fact, though: that a certain runner was responsible for making a run.

There are abbreviations for the various type of outs. K stood for strikeouts-- not that the pitcher got a strike out, but rather that the batter "struck out". F is for fly balls, D for bound outs,

and L for foul balls. What if you were put out by the first baseman getting the ball and stepping on first base? You may see 4 A 2 put on the score sheet as the bases were A, B, C, H in order. You made the second out of your club's half of the innings.

Chadwick's 1864 scoring system may seem odd and maybe even a little more complicated than what we are used to, but we can't argue with history. It's very interesting to see the way it evolved from then to what we have now. If you want to know more, find a reprint of a *Beadle's Dime Base Ball Player* and look for the section "On Scoring".

I think I might try it out the next time I score a game. If you'd like to try, you can download a PDF score card that I've made with hints to remind you of the correct symbols to use. It's available at the following address:

http://vbba.org/atc/score_card.php

PRIMARY SOURCES

A New Continuing Feature of The Ball Players' Chronicle.

Reading the newspaper articles and sporting publications which are the sources for our knowledge of the 19th-century game can be entertaining, as in the following line from the *St. Paul (Minnesota) Press* on September 21, 1865, at the conclusion of an article about a match between clubs from St. Paul and the nearby town of Hastings:

"The Hastings gentlemen went down last night on the steamer Itasca".

Alarming? Definitely, unless you know that Hastings is *downriver* from St. Paul, which is where the gentlemen went, rather than to the bottom of the Mississippi.

Mostly, however, trolling for gems in the reams of materials now available is a slog through eye-straining microfilm and/or online sources. Most of the latter require a subscription or a membership in groups like SABR. Our Primary Sources feature will offer selected items with a relevance to the

presentation of our game. A modest example follows.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 2, 1858.

“The Niagaras did not play as well as usual, and felt the loss of their short stop. Home runs were made by Murphy of the Niagara and Redfern of the Phenix. The following is the score:

NIAGARA.		
	H.L.	R.
Kent, 2d base	2	4
Richardson 1 st base	3	3
Shields, pitcher	4	3
Scott L field	3	3
Murphy, catcher	3	3
Owen, R field	4	2
Archer, M field	3	4
Ticknor, 3d base	4	<u>2</u>
	23	

Scorer- C.H.Matteson

PHENIX.		
	H. L.	Runs
Frost, C	2	4
Julian, R field	3	2
Bagey, pitcher	4	2
Adamle, 1 st base	2	2
Richards, 3 b	3	2
Pierce, s stop	2	2
Osborne, C field	3	2
Redfern, L field	1	4
Hovey, 2d base	4	<u>2</u>
	12	

Scorer: J.F.Fillips

Umpire- C.O.Born, Enterprise Club.”

A box score, then as now, is worth a thousand words. The box above is an example of the many to be found in the *Eagle* in the period 1858-1860 where nines were not full; teams of seven or eight took the

field, even for clubs with second nines. At least as late as 1860, clubs did not bring substitute players, and if there was a last-minute dropout, they played without. Note also that each team provides a scorer, as the rules require, and that the umpire’s club affiliation is noted. As is also typical, where only brief game highlights are present, the hitters of home runs are named.

#2- Play Nine Full Innings.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 22, 1860.

“A match was played on Tuesday, the 19th, between the Clifton and Willow Clubs, on the ground of the Mohawk, with the following result:

RUNS MADE EACH INNING.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Willow 1 1 9 2 0 1 0 3 0- 17
Clifton 5 1 3 1 2 2 5 1 5- 25

Scorer for Clifton, L.P.White
Scorer for Willow, P.A.Hardy
Umpire, H.Weeden of the Hiawatha, jr.”

The above, one example of many, shows the winning team batting in the ninth inning when it was already ahead, the standard practice.

#3A.G. Spalding and Bros. commenced publication of an annual base ball guide in 1876. By the 1885 edition it had expanded from a compilation of the previous season’s results and of the National League’s constitution and playing rules to include descriptions of important events of the previous year, new rules interpretations, and a necrology, in which could be found the names of base ball luminaries who had been run over by locomotives and had fallen out of windows. One unfortunate amateur hurler listed had died of “disease of the shoulder, caused by excessive muscular exertion of his arm in pitching.” (!) One of the items in “New Points of Play Developed” in 1884 is presented below.

“A new point was developed in the Chicago-Detroit game of July 29, in the case of the batsman- Ziller- while striking at the ball, missing it with the bat, but striking it with his body. As the ball by this means was sent out of the reach of the catcher, and in consequence a base was run, the question arose as to whether the decision should be the call of “dead ball” or one strike. Rule 30 defines a

ball “striking the batsman’s person, while standing in his position, *and without its being struck at*” as a dead ball. It was so decided in this case by Umpire Decker, and the runner who had taken his base on the play, was sent back to the base he left. Under a strict construction of the rule the act of striking at the ball prevented it from being called a “dead ball” from its having hit the body of the batsman, and consequently only the strike should have been called, and the runner have been allowed the base he ran on the play. The rule requires amending so as to prevent the batsman from willfully allowing the ball to strike him in order to afford the runner the chance to make a base. Section 5 of Rule 51 looks as if it covered the point; the rule in question covering the act of the batsman’s hindering the catcher—but that only applies when the hindrance is made without any “effort to make a fair hit”, whereas this ball was struck at and missed.”

Thus at least through 1885 a loophole allowed the batsman to help a runner advance by swinging at a pitch and allowing it to hit him.

CONVENTION!

JANUARY 18-20
BALTIMORE, MD

Thanks to Bruce Leith of the Elkton Eclipse and his co-hosts, the Chesapeake and Potomac BBC, the VBBA will be able to stage its first convention on the East Coast. Bruce has forwarded the following program outline. Watch the website for further information!

Friday Night:

Registration 3-6:30 pm
Welcome Social 7 pm

Saturday

Registration and Continental Breakfast 8-9 am
Welcome and Introductions 9:00-9:30 am
Breakout/Workshops 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Lunch 12:00-1:00 pm
Camden Yards Tour (group photo on field) 2-4 pm
Regional Meetings 4:30-5:30 pm
Cocktails 6:00-7:00 pm
Dinner (with keynote speaker) 7:00-9:00 pm

Sunday

Continental Breakfast 8-9 am
Silent Auction (final bidding) ending at 10 am
VBBA Board Meeting 9-10 am
VBBA Business Meeting 10 am-12 pm
Lunch with Richard D'Ambrisi (Baltimore and Base Ball) 12:30 – 1:30 pm
Sports Legends at Camden Yards Tour 2-5 pm
(or Babe Ruth Museum Tour)