

The Base Ball Players' Chronicle

"For the Glory of the Game!"

Newsletter of the Vintage Base Ball Association

July 2008

Vol. 8 No. 3

ACTIONS OF THE BOARD

The VBBA Board met on the evening of July 6. Attending were the VBBA President Glenn Drinkwater, the Vice President Ed Shuman, Secretary Erik Sjogren, Treasurer Rich Arpi, Historian and Editor of the newsletter Bob Tholkes, Trustees Ed Elmore and Scott Westgate, and Billy Pollifrone, who is both Trustee and the Webmaster. Reports were received as follows.

Treasurer: Treasurer Rich Arpi reported a balance of \$11,122.64, with all current bills paid.

Historian Bob Tholkes reported that the scanning of documents into the website archive has been commenced (see article below).

Membership: The Deep River Grinders (Hobart, IN), Genesee Country Village (Mumford, NY) Great Black Swamp

Frogs BBC (Sylvania, OH), and the Decatur, IL, Rock Spring Ground Squirrels have recently renewed, bringing the total of full members to 62.

Communications: Billy Pollifrone reported the revision of the format of the membership list on the website. He will submit a proposal to to revise the online membership list to make it changeable directly by members.

Webmaster: Billy suggested that the position title be changed to the more inclusive Information Technology Officer. Bob noted that the title is in the new VBBA Code of Regulations, and would a change will require action by the next convention.

Rules & Interpretation: Interpretative notes are being added to the rules (see the article below).

Under Old Business, President Drinkwater noted that umbrella 501c3 availability is still expected to be available early in 2009.

He also reported that no further offers to host the 2010 VBBA Convention have been received. Proposals will be requested of the two members who have offered to host, the Dunedin (FL) Historical Museum and the Welkin BBC (Port Huron, MI), and the site will be selected at the October board meeting.

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AMONG THE CLUBS

When the Sycamore Grasshoppers BBC of Wharton, Ohio and the Mohawk Historical Society went their separate ways during the off-season, one of the most venerable names in vintage base ball ceased operation. With the Society claiming the rights to the name, the club is continuing as the Wyandot Ghostriders.

According to their website, the Colorado Vintage Base Ball Association accepts no players above the age of 118. This seems a change from their previous policy, and

per Midwestern sources may truncate the careers of some of the gentlemen who were seen barnstorming with the club in that part of the country last season.

The Essex BBC, Lynn Live Oaks, Melrose Pondfeilders, and the Fitchburg Rollstones have formed the North Massachusetts Vintage Base Ball League this season, playing under the New England Vintage Base Ball League rules (1861). Each team plays 12 league matches.

The Milwaukee Grays, Cream City BBC, Dead City BBC, and the Eagle Diamonds have launched the 19th Century Base Ball Clubs of Wisconsin. In the words of the first issue of the *Cream City Gazette*, the group "will be working together to help spread the story of the origins of base ball's development in Wisconsin with hopes of securing non-profit status. By teaming up, the group will help to assure strict adherence to the maintenance of historical accuracy in the origins of the game, will collaborate to schedule matches and can assist other groups in establishing clubs in the state."

The Great Black Swamp Frogs of

Sylvania, Ohio, reached the 200-victory plateau when they won two on May 4.

On June 14, the New York Mutuals recorded their 140th victory, traveling to Pelham, New York to defeat the Knickerbocker Club.

On July 4, the Eclipse BBC of Northville, MI, hosted a four-way match entitled the "Gatling Gun Base Ball Shootout". The Eclipse won with 18 to 12 for the Wyandotte (MI) Stars, and three apiece for the Wood County Infirmary Inmates, of Bowling Green, OH, and the Walker Tavern Wheels, of Brooklyn, MI. According to Eclipse operator Mr. David Newhouse, the concept was devised to allow them to host multiple clubs on a single field. Each club batted and fielded three times against each of the others. The exercise required 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete nine innings.

On July 23rd, an exhibition between the Clodbusters of Dayton, Ohio and the Blues of Indianapolis at the Model T centennial celebration held in Richmond, Indiana, drew a crowd estimated at 2,500, according to an article

in the *Richmond Palladium-Item*.

Mr. Harlan (General) Worden, 73, of the Rochester Grangers, an original member who maintained perfect attendance at Granger events until this season, suffered a seizure prior to the club's participation in the Akron Cup on July 20 and is hospitalized.

The Quicksteps BBC (Minneapolis - St. Paul) entertained at a St. Paul Wild West Frontier Fest on July 27, playing five innings against costumed actors from the festival. Included in the opposing lineup were Annie Oakley, Buffalo Bill, Teddy Roosevelt, and Laura Ingalls Wilder.

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TOURNAMENT & FESTIVAL RESULTS

Maryland - New Jersey Challenge: The New Jersey nines emerged victorious in the April 27 event at Elkton Maryland, winning four of six matches on the day.

Gotham Cup, New York, New York: The Elizabeth (NJ) Athletic Club won the 1891 division, defeating the Glen Head (NY) Zig Zags 8-7 in the championship match.

The Shepard Barclay Festival, St. Louis, June 7-8: The co-host St. Louis Unions posted the best record with three victories and a tie.

Silas K. Pierce Cup (Michigan State Championship), Grand Rapids, MI: The Kent BBC clubs, the Kents and the Pioneers, both of Grand Rapids, and the Wahoo BBC of royal Oak, MI, shared the championship with 3-0 records.

Sylvania Cup, Sylvania, OH: Hosted by the Great Black Swamp Frogs of Sylvania, the Cup was won for 2008 by the Forest City Club of Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

Akron Cup, Akron, OH, July 20: The Rochester Grangers of Rochester Hills, MI, won all three of their matches.

VBBVA

SPOTLIGHT: **Fitchburg** **Rollstones**

Spotlighted in the current issue is the Fitchburg Rollstones, a first-year club whose foundation was the catalyst for the new North Massachusetts Vintage Base Ball League. Organizer John Palumbo sent these notes.

How did you start in vintage base ball?

I played baseball all throughout high school and college and I have always been interested in baseball history. As a kid, I would always read stories about Ted Williams, Shoeless Joe Jackson, and Babe Ruth.

Three years ago, I got the opportunity to play for the New Hampshire Granite Vintage Base *Ball Club*, which plays by 1886 rules. It was one of my best baseball experiences of ever. Baggy wool shirts and pants, short brimmed caps, and a tiny glove that barely covers your hand. I was hooked.

The Granite is a great bunch of guys. I really enjoyed playing with them and thank them for the opportunity to get involved in vintage base ball.

Where did the idea to start a club come from?

I decided at the end of last season to focus on the 1861 style, which incorporates underhand pitching and some other interesting rules. I did some research and with the help of the Fitchburg Historical Society, I came across a team that started in 1867, the Fitchburg Rollstones Athletic Club Base Ball Team. The

Rollstones were a formidable amateur ball club throughout the late 1860's and as a team of independent professionals in the 1870s.

What do you like about doing it?

Being a part of base ball history is what it is all about. Teaching fans about the past and learning about the game ourselves. Putting on that wool uniform and playing in an open field is like stepping back to a time when life was simple and innocent.

What was the toughest start-up problem?

Surprisingly, it has not been that difficult. Last fall, I presented the idea to several friends and former players on the high school team that I coach and they were very excited about the idea. Currently, we have players ranging in age from 18 to 40. Some have college baseball experience and some have no experience at all, but everyone plays and everyone has a great time playing the game the way it was played over a century ago. Over the winter, I ordered our uniforms and equipment and

also contacted the operators of two well-established 1861 clubs, Brian Sheehy of the Essex/Lynn Base Ball Clubs in Danvers, MA and Pat Harlow of the Melrose Pondfeilders, and we put together a Massachusetts League that plays a 12-game schedule with a tournament for the league championship in October. This summer has been a lot of fun. Our games have been very competitive and the sportsmanship of all the teams has been excellent. They show a true love of the game.

Goals for the club?

Mostly to learn the rules! 1861 has some very odd rules to learn and for those of us who have played modern baseball for so many years, some of our habits are hard to break...like not over-running first base on a hit! We are looking forward to bringing base ball history to fans for a long time to come.

Send items for the fall newsletter to editor Bob Tholkes at his email - vbahistorian@vba.org. Thanks!

NEWSLETTERS AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE

The complete run of the VBBA newsletter, originally titled *Early Innings illustrated* and later retitled *The Ball Player's Chronicle*, is now available to all members on the VBBA website, reports VBBA Historian Bob Tholkes, who uploaded the documents using Treasurer Rich Arpi's complete collection. The issues contain many fine articles of continuing interest to vintage ballists. To access the newsletters, sign on to the website, select the VBBA Member Resources page, select VBBA Newsletter under "Other Destinations", and select the underlined "view the archives". The list of newsletter will appear. These are large PDF files; allow time for them to open.

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RULES ANNOTATION PROCEEDING

President Glenn Drinkwater, who also is the chair of the Rules and Interpretations Committee, reported to the VBBA board on July 6 that the committee has commenced its

ambitious project of annotating the rules of base ball used by the VBBA member clubs with guidelines for historically accurate play. The rules for 1860 are the first year to be annotated.

The most knowledgeable researchers in 19th century base ball available have been recruited for the effort, including Peter Morris of Michigan, Fred Ivor-Campbell of Rhode Island, and Jim Tootle of the Ohio Village Muffins. Eric Miklich of Bethpage Village and the New York Mutuals has recently been added to the group.

From the editor:

This issue of the VBBA Ball Player's Chronicle lacks the more sophisticated formatting and the illustrations usually added by our able publisher, VBBA Webmaster and Trustee Billy Pollifrone. This is due to the time pressures of a busy season. I hope you will excuse this comparatively rude offering.

May all your drives find a hole, and your throws their destined mark.

Bob Tholkes, Editor