

VBBA BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETS USING COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

The Officers and trustees of the Vintage Base Ball Association met on Sunday, November 22. The meeting was conducted through a chat room on the Internet. Among the items discussed were the upcoming convention for 2010 in Port Huron, Michigan; how the election at the convention will be conducted; the nomination of candidates for the open positions on the board; a brief discussion of where the 2011 conference might be held; status of the application for 501c3 tax exempt status; notification of the members for payment of dues; the role of the VBBA in educating the members; and the next board meeting in January.

Members present for the meeting were: Glenn Drinkwater, President; Paul Salamone, Vice President; Scott Westgate, Secretary; Rich Arpi, Treasurer; Eric Miklich, Historian; Ed Elmore, Trustee; Helen DeGeatano, Trustee; Bill Dieckmann, Trustee; and Brian Sheehy, Trustee.

Scott Westgate reported that the codification of the by-laws, and the application for the tax-exempt status will be sent to the lawyer and the lawyer will complete the submission to the IRS. Scott said that the lawyer handling this specializes in this work, so the process should move along without unnecessary delay.

Several board members commented that the convention in March of 2010 would be March 27th through the 29th with plans for other activities following. Jim Fisher has submitted a brief outline of the highlights for the 2010 conference. (See information in separate article).

The discussion about this upcoming convention sparked questions about where the next convention would be in 2011. The consensus was that the

Northeast would be a wonderful place for 2011. The board will be happy to get proposals from teams for the conference. Any teams interested should contact the President, Glenn Drinkwater or the Secretary, Scott Westgate.

A discussion ensued regarding the role of the VBBA in educating folks about vintage base ball. Scott Westgate said: "this is a group not set-up for 'what's in it for me' but instead 'how can we educate, perpetuate, and re-create the great game of base ball'." Other questions followed, including should the VBBA take a more active role in tournaments, as well as how does the bigger group (VBBA) educate beyond the web site, and whether to hold regional meetings with discussions and workshops. Another question – is the VBBA going to make recommendations about historical accuracy? Glenn Drinkwater's comment was "The Education & Interpretation committee will develop a careful analysis of the historical game and provide accurate information along with a recommended process for interpreting the historical game - but the VBBA is not, and will not be, an enforcement entity."

Discussion about when dues notices would be sent to the membership. Treasurer Rich Arpi will be sending them to members soon.

A question about candidates for the upcoming board was raised. Scott Westgate reported that the nominating committee would have a slate of candidates for the next board meeting in January. The candidates will be listed on a ballot to be sent out to members a month before the conference, with write-ins permitted on the ballot, exactly as was done last year. Clubs not able to attend the convention should send absentee ballots to the Secretary, Scott Westgate. These will be tabulated at the conference, along with the votes of members present. The only difference from last year is that the final vote

will be held at the conference. The by-laws do not currently provide for nominations from the floor of the conference. Any changes to the voting process would require a vote by the membership to change the by-laws.

The by-laws state that the nominating committee is comprised of the President, a board trustee, and a non-board member. Vice-president Paul Salamone asked if the committee would present a complete list of viable candidates. President Glenn Drinkwater said that the nominating committee would be reviewing all recommendations and that any member could recommend candidates, but the final slate is a product of the committee's deliberative process.

Having concluded business, the meeting was adjourned, with another meeting to be held in January on a date specified by President Glenn Drinkwater.

Submitted by VBBA Secretary Scott Westgate from notes provided by Dave Brooks

VBBA BOARD of DIRECTORS

Glenn Drinkwater, Pres.
Paul Salamone, Vice Pres.
Scott Westgate, Secretary
Rich Arpi, Treasurer
Eric Miklich, Historian
Drew Frady, Trustee
Ed Elmore, Trustee
Helen DeGeatano, Trustee
Gary Hetzel, Trustee
Bill Dieckmann, Trustee
Brian Sheehy, Trustee

VBBA Conference, 2010

The Welkin Base Ball Club is proud to be the host of the 2010 VBBA conference and they look forward to seeing us all in Port Huron, Michigan. Jim Fisher, club spokesman says to "join us in Port Huron, Michigan— on March 26-28, 2010."

Port Huron is the heart of the Blue Water area. Located on Lake Huron, the Saint Clair River, and the Black River, Port Huron is a water lover's paradise. Port Huron is also an international city, linked to Canada by the Blue Water Bridge.

The conference will be held in the Thomas Edison Inn situated at the mouth of the Saint Clair River and the foot of the Blue Water Bridge. The beautiful Tudor style inn is named for one of Port

Huron's most prominent historical residents, Thomas Alva Edison.

Planned events and educational programs include: Mini historic home tour with wine and beer tasting; How to promote your ball club with little or no budget; Historic trolley ride; T-shirt swap; Banquet dinner; Evolution of vintage ball; Historic interpretation, and more.

About the ACCOMODATIONS:

Amenities abound at the Thomas Edison Inn—starting with the luxurious comfort of the tastefully appointed rooms and suites. Private balconies overlook the picturesque Saint Clair River and Lake Huron which are frequented by ocean going freighters. In room extras can include recliners

and built in Jacuzzi tubs. The Inn has an indoor pool and fitness club.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served in the Ivy dining Room and the Hunt Room Lodge is available for enjoying your favorite beverage. The menu of the Ivy Dining Room is extensive and enticing with many unique items available. The dessert menu has more than a dozen tasty treats.

Room reservations can be made by calling the Thomas Edison Inn direct at 1-800-451-7991. Mention "Vintage Base Ball" to get the special room rate.

Editor's note—the Inn only has 149 rooms so be sure to make your reservation early to avoid getting shut out. I hope to see you there.

Dave Brooks

THE WELKIN BASE BALL CLUB OF PORT HURON, MICHIGAN

The club is based on the original Welkin BBC of Port Huron from 1867. The Welkins played only for the one year. Port Huron's earliest Base Ball game took place on Wednesday, June 12 1867, between the "Welkins" and the "Regulars" of Mount Clemens. It is not known how long the match lasted, or the exact score, but the Welkin Club was victorious and out tallied the Regulars by 29 aces. They also participated in the World Base Ball Tournament in Detroit in August of 1867. They

withdrew from the tournament and forfeited the match to the Hamilton Maple Leaf Club after Welkin pitcher, Mr. Blennerhassett, was injured by a struck ball.

The reason they chose the name "Welkin" to represent their club is lost to history. The word *welkin* means "heavens" or "sky." "Make the welkin ring," was a common saying in the late 1860's. The familiar Christmas carol, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing", was originally "Hark, the Welkin, it Doth Ring." It is believed one or more of the origi-

nal Welkinites served in the 1st Artillery in the Civil War. The artillery would certainly have made the "welkin ring." The current Welkin Base Ball Club, is a vintage team based on Port Huron's first "club nine," and attempts to recreate the play and customs of that earlier time. Volunteer players, dressed in period uniforms and using a hand-stitched base ball, play by 1860 and 1867 rules. 2010 will mark the fourth year of play for the re-created Welkin Base Ball Club of Port Huron.

2010 VBBA Conference Registration

Hosted by:

The Welkin Vintage Base Ball Club of Port Huron

March 27 & 28 - 2010

The Thomas Edison Inn

500 Thomas Edison Parkway, Port Huron, MI 48060

Name: _____

Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Registrant: Nick Name: _____ @ \$85 ea. \$ _____

Saturday Banquet Guest: _____ @ \$45 ea. \$ _____

*Registration includes: 2 breakfasts; Education Seminars;
Saturday Banquet Dinner; convention bag & materials; and MORE!*

Pre-Order Conference T-Shirts: (mark size and quantity below)

Sm____ Med____ Lg____ XL____ XXL____ TOTAL____ x \$15 ea. \$ _____

Total Check Amount for All Registrations and T-Shirts: \$ _____

Are you donating item(s) for the silent auction? YES / NO _____

Please make check payable to: **Welkin Base Ball Club**

Send this form and your check to: **Welkin Base Ball Club**

VBBA Conference

816 Court St.

Port Huron, MI 48060

REGISTRATION DEADLINE February 28, 2010!!

We are looking forward to seeing you in Port Huron, the boyhood home of Thomas Edison.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Jim "Chops" Fisher:

(810) 984-8384 or thefishers4@gmail.com

Bill Phillips

By Craig Lammers

“Whoa Bill” Phillips, one of the most successful managers and scouts of the Deadball Era is mostly remembered today as a turn of the century pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds. “Silver Bill” as he was also nicknamed had a couple of pretty good years (and a couple of not so good years) in the major leagues as a pitcher, but his real legacy was as a manager and scout instrumental in the formation of the Federal League.

Phillips got his start as a player with the Washington Senators of the Atlantic Association in 1890. With three major leagues in operation that season he was acquired by the Pittsburgh Alleghenies in August. After a 1-9 record he was not retained for the 1891 season. After playing for six minor league teams in three years, he joined Indianapolis of the Western League in 1894. Indianapolis was a farm team of the Cincinnati Reds leading to Phillips return to the major leagues. He appeared in 18 games for the Reds in 1895 returning to Indianapolis for the next three seasons. Returning to the Reds in 1899, he had an excellent season winning 17 games. An important member of the pitching staff through 1903, he won 16 games in 1902.

An arm injury ended Bill’s major league career, and for a time it seemed his baseball career. He regained his effectiveness pitching in the Southern Association. He also developed an eye for talent there that would pay off when he came north again in 1908. At the age of 39 he was offered the job of playing manager for East Liverpool of the Class C Ohio Pennsylvania League. East Liverpool was near his home of Charleroi, Pennsylvania. Phillips stocked his first club with veteran players, most from Western Pennsylvania or who’d played with or against Phillips in the south. One of those players was Forbes “Scotty”

Alcock an Ohioan who’d play again for Phillips in the Federal League of 1913 before jumping the Feds for the White Sox.

Phillips finished second with East Liverpool, earning a promotion to Wheeling of the Class B Central League. He won a pennant at Wheeling with many of the same players in 1909, but had a second division team the next year. A playing manager in 1909, he retired as a player after that season. Strangely that second division team was his first real opportunity to sign and develop young talent. Fred Graf a semipro from Canton, and Earl Moseley a collegiate pitcher from Mount Union signed their first contracts with Phillips that spring. Neither was ready for the Central League, but both would reach the major leagues. Wheeling was affiliated with the Pittsburgh Pirates, and future major leaguers Rivington Bisland and likely Bill Doak were sent to Wheeling by the Pirates. He also received Burt Shotten on option from the St. Louis Browns and signed Fritz Maisel after the Northern Association folded. He also resurrected the career of a veteran Ohio minor leaguer. Jack Compton had been unable to pitch in 1909 due to a sore arm. After getting another chance by Phillips, Compton’s arm came around and he reached the major leagues with the Reds the following season.

In 1911, Phillips signed to manage Youngstown, Ohio, marking a return to the Ohio-Pennsylvania League. He inherited a few good players, and brought a few like Moseley back. By season’s end he would recommend Moseley to the Cubs and alert Jimmy McAleer of Washington on the potential of outfielder Howard Shanks. More importantly, he scouted an obscure Class D League.

The Northern State of Indiana League began life in 1907 as the Indiana-Ohio League. Shortstop Everett Scott had played briefly with

Youngstown in 1910 and was briefly on the roster of the Fairmont, West Virginia team. Most of his experience was with Kokomo and his home town of Bluffton in the Indiana League. Scott wasn’t the only infielder Phillips spotted in the league. He signed Al Scheer as a second baseman in the spring of 1911 but returned him to Bluffton at the end of spring training. According to the *Youngstown Vindicator*, Scheer was returned to Bluffton for financial reasons. After another infielder didn’t work out, Phillips repurchased Scheer at midseason. He’d also recommend Scheer to McAleer but he failed to make the Washington team in 1912 and returned to Youngstown. Finishing second the first year at Youngstown, he won the pennant in 1912, recommending Scott & Moseley to the Red Sox.

After winning the pennant for Youngstown, there was friction with ownership likely over salary and Phillips did not return. Instead he was instrumental in the success of the Federal League after being hired as manager of the league’s Indianapolis team. He brought Charles Conway with him from Youngstown and convinced Scheer to join the Hoosiers after brief 1913 appearances with Brooklyn and Providence. He signed Alcock from the local American Association team after he’d been optioned to Canton. He also assembled a group of players he was familiar with from his time in the Central League. This group included Bidly Dolan the 1913 Federal League batting champ, Carl Vandergrift and at midseason a pair of Georges Kaiserling and Textor. The acquisition of Textor as a free agent created no controversy, but Kaiserling was convinced to join the Feds after the local American Association team wanted to send him to the Pacific Coast League.

The following season the Federal League upgraded to major league status and Phillips brought back an old favorite Earl Moseley. Several of the 1913 favorites were retained

VBBA Member Profile— Gary, “No Handlebar” Hetzel

and other role players such as Bill Warren who shared the catching with Textor were brought in. He also signed his third baseman from Wheeling in 1909 to replace the departed Alcock. That third baseman was Bill McKechnie. Phillips won his third consecutive pennant and second straight with the Hoosiers in 1914 and remained with the team when it was transferred to Newark in 1915. In June of 1915, the Newark team fired the man who'd been instrumental in the success of the Federal League, replacing him with McKechnie and Bill Phillips' career as a manager and scout was over. He returned to Charleroi and entered business. By the time of his death on October 25, 1941 The Charleroi *Daily Mail* referred to him as “revered in the annals of the sport.”

Sources:

East Liverpool Times
Canton Repository
Youngstown Vindicator
Indianapolis Star
Charleroi Daily Mail

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Craig Lammers has written biographies on several baseball players, including Jim Hughey, Leander "Dan" Abbott and William Wright. Craig Lammers is a member of the Roger Bresnahan/Toledo Mud Hens chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), a national organization. He has written the biographies as part of the SABR Baseball Biography Project. Craig is also a vintage base ball player and began the North Baltimore Cyclones this past season. He is looking forward to more games for his new

LETTERS:

Note from the editor: Readers, your comments and concerns will make this a better newsletter. Please send me yours.

D. Brooks dbigdogbrooks@brecnet.com

In 2004 Gary "Handlebar" Hetzel worked with the Milwaukee Public Museum education department. He was given the task of coming up with a weekend program to celebrate the history of baseball in Wisconsin. What started out as a simple project that would look at the history of the Braves and Brewers led to something completely different. As Gary went back further in history, he found a very rich tradition of baseball in the state that includes the Milwaukee Chicks of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, the Milwaukee Bears of the Negro League, the minor-league Brewers and even a team called the Cream Citys that were part of the National League.

With a little more digging he found that a group known as the Cream City BBC was formed in 1865. Gary kept digging and found that on November 30th, 1859, a handful of gentlemen, led by Rufus King, then editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel (and later a Union General) braved the winter weather to play the first organized game of base ball in Milwaukee at the Old State Fair Grounds on Spring Street. The game only lasted three innings but sported a robust score of 40-35. Rufus King played in the game and stated: “The game now so popular in the East, is about to be introduced in our city. A very spirited match was played at the Fair Grounds, Spring Street Avenue, yesterday afternoon.” The *Milwaukee Sentinel* went on to report two other base ball matches played later in December. Rufus King, who played in the first game, was a perfect example of the gentlemanly type of ballist who played in the early days of base ball in Milwaukee.

Gary became more and more in-

terested in the "origins" of base ball in Milwaukee rather than the original focus of the Brewers and Braves and thought that being able to recreate or reenact an original game of base ball would be a great attraction. As he continued his research, he found out a local Civil War unit played an annual game at one of the reenactments in the area and tried to contact them. Before they answered Gary discovered a site called Vintage Base Ball Association. Gary quickly got in contact with Dean Thilgen of the St. Croix BBC and collected as much information as he could, devised a plan and took it to the Milwaukee Public Museum program committee. He came out of the meeting with the green light to organize a club, join the VBBA, purchase uniforms, balls and bats and to have it all ready for use to promote the baseball weekend, less than four months away.

Thus, the Milwaukee Cream Citys Base Ball Club was established in 2004 to educate the community about the origins of our national pastime, base ball. The Milwaukee Cream Citys inaugural season was a big success although they only played a total of four games, the first being an inter-squad game to open the season at Helfaer Field outside of Miller Park. The club consisted of 15 museum employees, a walk-on, a tally lady, and an umpire. The other three games pitted the Cream Citys against Civil War troops at re-enactments in the southeastern part of the state. The Cream Citys were the only vintage base ball team in the state of Wisconsin in 2004. One of the team goals was to draw interest in vintage base ball with the hopes that other groups will establish teams in the area and throughout

Member Profile continued:

the state. The Eagle Diamonds formed in 2005 in Old World Wisconsin with the assistance of the Cream Citys. The 5th Wisconsin Volunteers, the Civil War troops they have played over the past three years, officially formed into another team. The Greenbush Dead Citys of the Old Wade House were established in 2006, the Milwaukee Grays (an offshoot of the growing Cream Citys) in 2008 and another club, the Sharon Slammers, has made its way to Milwaukee the past two years. After two years with the public museum as the main sponsor, the club went independent and remains so through today, trying to gain non-profit status to aid in building their coffers so that the team can travel more.

From the original club in 2004, only Handlebar and Mark "Last Minute" Mayzik (the walk-on at the initial match) remain. The Cream Citys have been members of the VBBA since 2004 and have sent representatives to the yearly convention in all but one year. Gary joined the trustees this past year in Cincinnati. Handlebar has mainly manned the short scout position, but other duties and a broken hand this past fall will probably see him moving to third tender in the future.

The Cream Citys are proud of their club, their adversaries and the manner in which all conduct themselves on the field and in representing the proud game of base ball. Three traditions of the Cream Citys proud of are: a match against the Rufus King High School varsity squad at the beginning of the year. Since King brought the game of base ball to Milwaukee its just a natural and the high school players really enjoy the original brand of the game they play for keeps;

their annual two-day Festival that has been visited by clubs from throughout the Midwest including, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan (2010), Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and of course Wisconsin; and their annual "winter classic" a match played the first weekend in December to honor the first match played back in 1859. The Rufus King squad won this year's contest 22-19, playing in three inches of

snow with temperatures just below 30. Any and all are welcome to play in this match and ballists from age 8 to 65 took part.

As for the future, the Cream Citys have established themselves well and look forward to a trip to the Queen City Base Ball Festival in Cincinnati and have 25 matches on the slate for 2010. They look forward to welcoming 5 new clubs to the great state of Wisconsin

Origins of the Milwaukee Cream City Base Ball Club

Gary "Handlebar" Hetzel's research into early Milwaukee base ball found a very rich tradition of baseball. A group known as the Cream City BBC was formed in 1865. Gary kept digging and found that on November 30th, 1859, a handful of gentlemen played the first organized game of base ball in Milwaukee at the Old State Fair Grounds on Spring Street (more details in the VBBA member profile above). Rufus King saw the potential and interest that was generated by this and formed the city's first base ball club on April 5, 1860. The team only lasted for one season, playing at a ball diamond on Spring Street Hill. General King and many of the players traded their bats for arms and went off to fight in the Civil War, thus ending Milwaukee's first attempt at fielding a base ball team. Some criticized this as a "feeble excuse" since "everybody knows the war'll be

over in three months. So why break up the ball club?"

Eventually the war did end and when survivors returned, a team called the Cream City Club was organized. The team developed over the years and won the state championship in 1868, beating the all-German team, the Monitors. Gaining recognition, the Cream Citys were able to attract the Cincinnati Red Stockings, America's first professional nine, to Milwaukee. The Red Stockings defeated the Cream Citys 85-7 on July 30, 1869, on their way to an undefeated 65 game tour around the nation. The Red Stockings extended their streak to 130 games before losing in 1870. In 1870, the Cream Citys schedule included a match against the Chicagos of Chicago, losing 71-19. The Chicagos would eventually evolve into the Chicago Cubs.

Attention! Valuable prizes for you!!

Win fame and adulation by writing original stories for the VBBA newsletter. The newsletter is looking for articles about things from the past. Do you have some information about a particularly interesting base ball match from the nineteenth century? Write it up! Have you researched an important base ball personality from the nineteenth century? Submit your findings to the newsletter! Are you knowledgeable in changes in how the game was played? Write a concise article focused on a particular change explaining why it happened! This is your chance to become famous and have your words read by thousands!!! (Prizes to the first to respond)

Marketing Your Vintage Base Ball Club, **by Bruce Leith of the Elkton Base Ball Club**

Do you lament that you've spent all this time setting up your vintage base ball club and no one comes to see it? Your club really likes to play and wants to see new clubs but can't afford to travel? You can't get nine guys to show up? Its time to start re-thinking how you and others view your organization!

Your club is a very valuable commodity and product even if you don't think so. You need to realize that your organization is a brand and you should start thinking that people are very interested in it and you should pride yourself on this. Vintage base ball is not your local bar softball league. It's a very unique sport that is timeless and can draw hundreds to your matches. In this story, we'll tell you some ways to promote your club, raise some money and draw attention to your club like it's the biggest game in town.

The first thing you need to do is get out in your community during the winter and tell your town about what you are doing. Even if you are a successful club with 14 guys showing up regularly, do they tell the rest of the world about vintage base ball or are there just families showing up to your matches? As baseball season approaches and people are sick of the cold, people are clamoring for the national pastime. Reach out to your local Rotary Club, Lions Club, and especially your chamber of commerce. Ask if you can be a guest speaker at one of their monthly meetings. Chances are they are so sick of the same tired speakers that they will relish the opportunity to say

yes. These groups are very important to you as while they may not come out individually to see your matches or play, they are owners of businesses and they have sponsorship money for you if you draw their attention. They may not play, but they sure know someone from church or the local car dealer who used to play softball and would really love to come and tryout for your club. Once you get to one of these meetings bring a teammate and make sure you dress in your uniform and bring a bat and ball. It will hold the attention of everyone in the room. Besides going in with the obvious facts: where you play, the rule differences, etc also go in with a sponsorship plan.

A sponsorship plan does not mean you have to ask each business in town for \$500 or more for their support. Generally, you won't get this, but you will get smaller amounts. One of the most successful programs the Elkton club has is social memberships. For just \$20, a friend can sign up as a social member of the club. Offer special things to social members: a free "season ticket" which lets them in to the matches for nothing (even if your events are free anyway it gives them something), if you sell merchandise give them 10% off, make a quarterly newsletter and give it to them, have a special raffle just for social members and have "club days" where you throw a barbecue and invite them and they can watch you practice and ask questions. If you get 10 guys on your club to each sell 4 of these you're looking at \$800 for virtually nothing and this will pay for your club's insurance, balls, bats, and even uni-

form parts. The Elkton club will be putting out a pamphlet in the spring about other fundraising ideas including making programs and selling ads starting at \$40-\$100, schedule magnets, coasters, and much more. Contact us for more information.

Do some fundraising at your matches. If you have 19th century characters at your matches, get a snake oil salesman or "seedy gambler" to go in the crowd and sell 50/50 tickets with a twist. If a person thinks your club is going to win, they buy a red ticket for \$1, if they think the other club is going to win they buy a blue ticket for \$1. If your club wins, the winner of the drawing is picked from all of the people who purchased a red ticket. Set up a concession stand selling bottled water that you put your own label on. Set up a hot dog stand, sell popcorn, peanuts, and cracker jack (just make sure you get a food permit from the local health department-they're usually free to non profits). Make up scorecards or programs and sell them at your matches. (Elkton will sell to you a custom made one that you can then turn around and sell to your fans)

Now you have some money, but how do you get fans to come to your matches? There is your local newspaper but chances are you have already gone this route. Don't forget all of the tiny magazines and journals in your region as well. Another route is to make up 19th century looking broadsides and distribute them all over town. One of the best places to send a broadside is to retirement homes and assisted living facili-

Marketing Your Club cont'd.

ties. You would be amazed how many of these groups are looking for new opportunities to take their residents to—especially something as great as baseball from the “olden days”. Take your broadsides to little league fields, softball games, and anywhere there is a baseball audience. If you can get them in schools and churches, it's a great opportunity because of the wholesome nature of vintage base ball.

Contact the largest city newspaper in your region. Your local paper may not want to do any more stories on you, but large city papers are looking for your story. It was extremely difficult to get our local paper to do a story on the Eclipse, but when we approached the Baltimore Sun they jumped on the story. When our local paper saw that they had been “scooped” by the large city paper, they immediately jumped on a story. That story then went to the AP and it got all over the region. Don't sell yourself short—we have been in the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, even the Wall Street Journal as well as NBC Sunday Night Sports Round Up and Comcast SportsNet. Establish a list of media contacts and send them press releases every couple of weeks. Eventually something will catch an editor's eye and your club will be in their publication.

As mentioned earlier do a newsletter. Send it to all of your contacts; send it to town officials and local and state politicians; send it to the media (don't forget local bloggers—they love the stuff); send it to non-profit group; send it to sports groups; send it to anyone who has ever shown an interest. You can do it all by email. It can

look really great with some basic software and will save you printing and postage costs. Put in the newsletter your schedule, where your games are, stories about upcoming tournaments, information on being a sponsor, past match performances, fundraisers, and any and everything related to your club. Put it out 3-4 times a year and it will keep people interested.

As you draw more and more attention to your club, you will get more and more prospective players. Just remember you have to actually go out and recruit them or get them to come to events. People who say they will from a computer rarely come out so don't count on them until you throw them an actual ball. Pretty soon with just some of these basic steps, your club will be the talk of the town with enough money that you won't need to charge dues and enough players that you will contemplate starting a second or even third nine!

Editor's comments, cont'd from right

criteria I wanted for each issue. There are items reprinted from the past; items that have been written recently about the past; items about current teams and players; and information about the VBBA. Is there any aspect of vintage base ball you feel should be added? Several readers have asked for pictures. I have a dial-up internet service and if I added pictures to the newsletter, the file size would be too big for my service to handle. While I am editor, we will have to do without pictures. Thanks to you who have expressed your opinion of the newsletter. All others are invited to send your comments.
Dave Brooks

Editor's Comments:

There are a lot of you out there who are diligent researchers and genuine students of baseball. I am more of a casual student of the history of baseball and what it was like and sometimes what I say is more opinion than fact. Here's something I have been thinking about recently:

As baseball evolved in the last half of the nineteenth century, the level of competitiveness in the teams probably did not change. There were two types of teams back then and two types now in vintage ball. There were and are the social clubs who schedule an opponent so they can have a good time playing and then enjoying a repast with beverages. Then there were teams back then and are teams playing now who want to play at the highest level, who want to win all the games in a competitive tournament, who want to be declared the champion, and who want to be the winners of the league. These two styles are both represented in the VBBA. There are great competitive tournaments where players reach for the highest level of skill and there are great festivals that celebrate the camaraderie of our game. I enjoy it all and many of you do too. So, what is my point? Go out and play, enjoy, and strive, but above all, respect the game!

This is the fourth newsletter I have put together for the VBBA membership and others interested in the vintage game I originally thought that items should be 500 words or less. This fourth newsletter has broken that rule. Almost every item is more than twice that. So, readers, are the items too long? Are you losing interest in an item because it is just going on too long? The scope of what is included in this newsletter still covers all the

Old time team:

Bay City Independents, by Jayme Johnson

Bay City has a very long and proud baseball tradition. Youth league and high school students have played the game with pride and excellence for decades in the city by the bay. Many baseball championships have been attained over those years, and stories of individual greatness achieved by the scores of young ballists throughout the Bay Area are well known, but the story of base ball's infancy in Bay City goes back well into the 19th century. It is a story that begins in a time when the world seemed much larger and the game of base ball was taking the country by storm. In these next few paragraphs I would like to tell the first known chapters of that long ago story.

Base ball had begun to take hold of America in the late 1850's. During the Civil War the game was introduced to parts of the country which had previously been foreigners to its rules and intricacies. When the war ended, base ball had grown from a localized East Coast fever into a nationwide epidemic. Previous to the war's outbreak, the base ball bug reared its head here in Michigan, when the Franklin Club of Detroit became the first ball club in the state in 1857. Soon after, clubs sprang up in other parts of Michigan as well.

Following in the footsteps of the Franklins, the Washington Club of Bay City was founded in 1865 by a gentlemen named A. C. Maxwell. The Washingtons had a good level of success in their first season, and found themselves victorious in matches against the Capital Club of Lansing. They defeated the Capitals both in Lansing, and in a return engagement in Bay City where the home town boys would hold off the gentlemen from Lansing 30-29.

In 1866 the boys from Bay City found themselves to be the first club to challenge the Detroit Base Ball Club for the State Championship. According to reports the Bay City

club had its practice schedule interrupted by rain, many of their first nine were absent in Canada, and their starting short-stop, W. H. Fennell, had been accidentally shot in the hand just days previous to the match. It was no wonder, that the Detroit club mopped the floor with them by a score of 40-13. After the Washington club's flower had faded, other clubs sprang up here in Bay City. Two club's of note were the Empire Club of the later 1860s and The Nationals, of the 1870s.

One of the first mentions of the Bay City Base Ball Club can be found in the pages of the Bay City Tribune on May 26, 1882. The Tribune gives an account of a game played between the Bay Citys and Capt. Jack's Mascottes, which was played on the grounds on the corner of Sherman and Second Streets. Five innings were played that day, resulting in a score of 6 to 4 in favor of the Bay City team that would later become known as the Independents. The team they battled that day was a barnstorming team formed by the then great professional ballist known as Captain Jack Glasscock. Glasscock would later play shortstop for the Indianapolis team of the American Association. The article would then go on to document that the Bay Citys had already raised \$125 by subscription and would soon appear in uniform. The fact that the team had to raise money to buy uniforms would lead you to believe that the original Bay City Base Ball Club was a completely amateur team. That thought is proven as truth in a later Bay City Tribune article that boasts of the ball teams talent at defeating "All picked nines", despite the fact that all members of the team were amateur players who resided in the Bay City Area. Some of the area clubs of the day had begun to enlist some professional players when they engaged themselves in high stakes matches. After besting several such opponents the Bay City team would

finally appear in their new uniforms on June 21st during a match against the Caro team. The team was outfitted in white pants, white jerseys, red stockings, red belts, and red caps.

The Bay Citys would don those uniforms with a great measure of success against area teams. By mid-August the club had rung up quite a splendid record which included only 4 defeats by area amateur competition. The Bay City team had also tried their luck against many barnstorming major league clubs during the summer of 1882, but they tallied no victories among the professional ranks. The accomplishments of the Bay City nine led them to abandon the less than accommodating grounds of Sherman and Second Street, and procure a better playing field at the corner of Woodside Ave. and Lincoln. The team leaders were also able to engage the Shearer Company to take up a contract for the construction of a grandstand at the new ball grounds. The grandstand was supposed to have a capacity of approximately 450 persons, and it would be the cornerstone for what would become Woodside Park. It was at this time that the fledgling ball club found out that they had been chosen to be one of the charter members of Elias Mather's Northwestern League.

The Northwestern League was scheduled to begin play in the spring of 1883, but it was in February of that year when the game truly began. It was in February that Mather met with the leaders of the two major leagues that existed at the time and entered his Northwestern League into a National Agreement with the two leagues. This agreement would make the Northwestern League the very first minor league whose player's contracts would be respected by Major League Base Ball. This in effect made Bay City one of the charter teams in what would become the first modern minor league.

Club Profile:

The Essex Base Ball Organization

The Essex Base Ball Organization is a vintage base ball organization dedicated to playing, educating, and demonstrating the history of baseball in the 19th century. The Essex Base Ball Organization holds games, demonstrations, kids clinics, and lectures to bring the history of baseball to life. The organization is made up of three teams: the Essex Base Ball Club, Lynn Live Oaks, and Boston Beaneaters. We are based out of Danvers, Massachusetts but travel throughout the state holding exhibitions and demonstrations for historical societies, school programs, and other civic organizations. The Essex BBC and Lynn Live Oaks play by 1861 rules while the Boston Beaneaters play overhand rules, primarily 1886.

The Essex Base Ball Club was founded in 2002 by the Danvers Historical Society. We take our name from an actual club playing base ball in Danvers in 1859. The Essex Base Ball Club played its inaugural match on July 1, 2002 vs. the Melrose Pondfielders before 1,000 cranks assembled around an open field in Endicott Park, Danvers, MA. Since then, the EBBC has traveled throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, and Connecticut playing & promoting vintage base ball.

The Lynn Live Oaks were founded in 2005 as an offshoot of the Essex Base Ball Club. Lynn takes its name from a club that existed in Lynn, MA in 1877. The Boston Beaneaters are the newest club of the Essex Base Ball Organization. The club is a

combination of Essex, Lynn, and Waterbury Connors who decided to try their hand at the overhand rules.

Essex and Lynn are in the Northern Massachusetts Vintage Base Ball League which also includes the Melrose Pondfielders, Fitchburg Rollstones, and Leominster Calumets. The Beaneaters compete in the Northern Division of the overhand New England Vintage Base Ball League with teams like the Providence Grays, NH Granite, Boston Colonials, and Olneyville Cadets.

For more information on our club you can check out our web site at www.essexbaseball.wordpress.com

JOIN THE VBBA

**Individuals - join for
just \$10 per year!**

Clubs - Full membership for only \$50 per year; Associates for \$35 per year.

**See web site for details:
www.vbba.org**

**Note to new clubs:
Your membership in the VBBA is important. Join now!**

NEW CLUBS

Vintage base ball has grown because men and women go through the effort of forming clubs and putting teams onto fields across North America. Thanks to all of you who have done this in the past. This coming year more new teams are forming. Please support the new teams in your area.

New League in Hartford

The Friends of Vintage Base Ball reports that Billy Barnie's Blue Boys will be playing base ball by 19th century rules. They will be joined by three other teams: The Nutmegs, The Charter Oak and the Alert Fire Hose Company, to form Coltsville Vintage Base Ball League. League play will occur weekly at The Hartford Baseball Grounds at Colt Meadows beginning in May and culminating in a Fourth of July weekend tournament in Hartford. For more information on the Coltsville Vintage Base Ball League, visit <http://cvbbl.blogspot.com>

Please let me know of other clubs starting this coming year and how they are doing.

Dave Brooks

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CLUB PROFILE

The next issue of the newsletter could contain a profile of your club. Send your club information, history, and experiences to Dave Brooks and spread the word about your club. Is your club named for a team from the past? Are your players young, old or a mix? Where do you play your home matches? What rule set do you play? Why did your club choose that rule set?

Upcoming Events in 2010:

Editor's Note: There are two events coming in 2010 that I wish I could go to. The first will be in Cooperstown, hosted by the Saginaw Old Golds. The second is based on an article published in the MetroWest Daily News and online at www.metrowestdailynews.com. The complete story is being reprinted as we found it online. The original story is by Michael Morton. There is an event I will attend—the 2010 VBBA conference.

John Clarkson Classic in Cooperstown

The Saginaw 'Old Golds' are working on a 5-team Vintage Base Ball Tournament in Cooperstown, New York for Saturday May 15th and Sunday May 16th, 2010 with the City Fathers. The games to be hopefully held at: the Double Day Field and the Farmers Museum Grounds during that weekend. Plans will be finalized in the third week of January. The teams will be: Saginaw 'Old Golds' from Saginaw, Michigan, Mudville from Holliston, Mass, Atlantic Base Ball Club from Smithtown, New York, New York Mutuals from Farmingdale, New York, and the New York Gothams. The teams will hold a seminar in the evening to explain the game the way it was played in 1865. There will be no cost for the games or the seminar for the fans. It will be an honor for these 5-teams to play in historic Cooperstown, New York. Note: All teams have team insurance. Double Day Field will need no changes for Vintage Base Ball, except laying down a pitching slam from 45 feet away. At the Farmers Museum, Saginaw will supply the team benches and bases. Saginaw will also bring an Umpire and Tally Girl. Richard Curry will pick up all costs.

Richard "Professor" Curry: Manager of the Saginaw 'Old Golds'.
E-Mail: Clarkson1883@yahoo.com.

HOLLISTON —

This time, Mudville can't lose.

Two amateur, old-time baseball teams that plan to take the field in California next July both represent a chunk of America tied to that earthy epithet. In one dugout, the middle-aged members of the Mudville Baseball Club, a name drawn from a tiny hamlet in their Holliston hometown. In the other, the Amador County Crushers of Gold Country, play-

ing for a riverfront section of Stockton, Calif., once known as Mudville.

The reason for the contest? A rivalry of sorts over baseball's most cherished poem: "Casey at the Bat." Holliston and Stockton both claim they inspired its author, Ernest Thayer, to pen the classic. Before his death, Thayer told a reporter that the poem's Mudville setting, and its slugger, Mighty Casey, had no basis in fact.

But that hasn't stopped the speculation.

THE POEM

Shortly after graduating from Harvard, Thayer joined the staff of the San Francisco Examiner to cover baseball at the behest of owner and classmate William Randolph Hearst. On June 3, 1888, Thayer published "Casey at the Bat" under his pen name, Phin.

The poem gained little notice at first, until comedian De Wolf Hopper performed it on stage. From there it exploded in popularity, ultimately becoming one of baseball's most loved poems, and one of the nation's most recognizable. It has spawned dozens of parodies, a Disney animated movie and even an opera.

Despite statistics showing that even the best hitters fail two thirds of the time, readers of the poem still let themselves believe that this time Casey can pull through, Holliston historian and baseball buff Joanne Hulbert says.

With the home team down, 4-2, in the last inning, most fans in the poem leave, but others cling "to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast," thinking, "if only Casey could get a whack at that."

Two of Casey's light-hitting teammates, one a "lulu" and one a "cake," shockingly get on base before the star. With the crowd roaring and anticipation building, he lets two pitches go by for strikes, then follows with the biggest whiff in literature. Taking his best shot, Mighty Casey strikes out.

"It's something that everybody can identify with," says Hulbert in her Mudville home.

THE CLAIMS

The origins are unclear, but the name Mudville in Holliston is first mentioned in an 1856 newspaper article. While the neighborhood is low-lying and muddy, Hulbert has another theory for the name: a "your name is mud" insult directed at

Irish residents.

Regardless, the Casey at the Bat connection comes from Thayer's childhood in Worcester, his family's Mendon summer home and the Darling woolen mill they owned on Holliston's Woodland Street, just a mile down the railroad tracks from Mudville. Filled with Irish players, Holliston baseball teams played against nearby towns.

"Could he have heard of Mudville?"

Hulbert asked. "Yes, he had ample opportunity to do so."

If there's any doubt about neighborhood pride in Casey, it's quickly dispelled. Before entering Mudville proper, a visitor might spot Casey's Crossing pub. From there, venturing down Mechanic Street onto School Street brings a newcomer to Bobby Blair's \$2,000 pin oak statue of the legend.

"We're the true, legit Mudville here," said Blair, known to many as the mayor of Mudville. "With California hardly being a state at the time, the true claim belongs to us."

Asked about other birthright claims to the poem, Hulbert, known to call the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and travel to far-flung baseball conventions to bolster Holliston's case, gave a somewhat tongue-in-cheek answer.

"We don't think it's a rivalry," she said. "Because we didn't think we had a rival." On the other side of the country, California residents disagree.

"It's pretty clear that Stockton is the original Mudville, but I'm sure the folks back in Holliston make the same claim," said Bill Maxwell, the archives manager at the Bank of Stockton.

An inland port south of Sacramento and east of the Bay Area, Stockton's riverfront was once described as a sea of mud thanks to hydraulic gold mining equipment, forcing boat crews to constantly clean their boots and possibly inspiring the nickname Mudville.

City residents like Maxwell point to a local baseball team from the late 1880s whose players shared names with those in Thayer's poem: Cooney, Barrows and Flynn. They also cite an 1887 game against a traveling all-star team featuring a Casey-like player, with a final score of 4-2.

"I think when push comes to shove, most Stocktonians would want to uphold the claim," Maxwell said.

Upcoming Events, cont'd.

At the city's Haggins Museum, archival collection curator Kimberly Bowden said she gets calls from both coasts pushing Casey claims, as if she were the final arbiter.

"This has been a longtime battle," she said. "It's a fun quest."

In 1999, the Ports, the local minor league team, changed its name to the Mudville Nine and adopted a Casey caricature as a mascot. The team later reverted to its former nickname, reportedly because of an affiliation switch and a licensing issue.

But Hulbert doesn't see it that way.

"That tells me there's not much staying power there," she said.

THE TEAMS

At Hulbert's suggestion, Holliston resident John Shannahan recruited fellow town softball fans and formed a vintage baseball team in 2003, choosing to play by Massachusetts 1858 rules to recall the town's heyday in the sport.

The Mudville team's games are played like they were back then: Pitchers want batters to put the ball in play, the infield is shaped like a square instead of a diamond, fielders don't use gloves, runners grab poles rather than touch bases and there is no foul territory.

Most entertainingly, outs can be made by "plugging" or "soaking" runners with the ball, a softer version with yarn wound around the core.

While most team members never made it past high school baseball, they still love the game enough to travel by train and bus to far-off games. Their passion was on display during a recent game against Palmer, shouting encouragement, hustling to make plays and razzing their big hitter with a cry of "Casey" when he swung through a pitch.

Given their Mudville name, the team is typically asked to march in Hartford's St. Patrick's Day parade, and children have requested players' autographs.

"If we were just the Holliston Baseball Club, we'd be just like so many others," said Shannahan, whose on-field nickname is "Choo-Choo."

Holliston's opponent, the Crushers, is not quite from Stockton, but captain Rick "Hawk" Hawkins grew up nearby and is vested in the Casey claim. Asked to represent the city, his team has a similar demographic to Shannahan's, but with a few 30-year-olds that occasionally grow a bit too intense.

"We have to calm them down a little," the 50-year-old said.

THE GAME

Following a 2004 newspaper column in Stockton challenging Holliston's Casey claim, Shannahan wrote to the paper and to city officials proposing a game. He pitched a friendly showdown for the following year, billing it as a way to celebrate baseball and honor a shared hero.

But bureaucratic inertia and a busy Stockton construction schedule doomed the match, and the suggestion languished. It was resurrected this summer, when one of the Mudville players realized he had access to a San Francisco Giants luxury box for the team to watch a game.

To maximize their trip, Shannahan called the Ports, and the Ports contacted the Crushers. The vintage game is tentatively scheduled for July in the Ports' stadium, which opened in 2005 on the site where city boosters say the real-life Casey and his teammates played.

The stadium has a Casey's Corner Grill barbecue stand, and the alumni club for former players and coaches is called Mudville Matters.

"It's something we have fun with and enjoy," team spokeswoman Kristin Pratt said.

Beyond the date, the two sides also have to agree on a playing style: either 1858 rules or the Crushers' 1880s version, which Casey would have found familiar. It involves gloves, fast pitches and harder baseballs.

"I'm not sure we're up to that," Shannahan said, adding that the game might involve some good-natured chest-thumping but is not intended to seriously settle Casey claims.

THE MYSTERY

While Thayer said the poem had no basis in fact, he did not initially claim it as his work. Later, Maxwell believes, the author may have simply wanted to put the poem behind him.

Hulbert speculates that Thayer would not have wanted a connection with Holliston's Mudville, a neighborhood with a colorful reputation that hosted numerous "kitchen" bars.

"He certainly wouldn't want to admit he'd ever been there," she said.

While Tim Wiles, the Hall of Fame's research director, thinks the idea of Thayer catching a Mudville game may be a stretch - though no more so than Stockton's evidence - he gives credence to Hulbert's theory on Thayer's intent. The Harvard graduate had aspirations of becoming an "American Shakespeare," Wiles said, not a creator of doggerel

verse on sport.

"He did have this element of diffidence about this piece of work," he said. "And yet it's arguably the best known American poem. One hundred and thirty years later we're still discussing it, even though the guy struck out."

Assuming the poem's origins were covered up, Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia would likely be thrown in the mix as claimants, too, Wiles said. In August 1887, Thayer visited Philadelphia, a month when *The Sporting News* recounted a game that saw a pitcher named Dan Casey single in the ninth inning with the bases loaded and the score 4-2. Like Thayer's poem, the recap included the words hope, mighty and Casey at the bat.

"It looked like it's almost cribbed," Wiles said.

But ultimately, Wiles said, no one place can garner enough evidence to build a conclusive case, speaking to the power of the poem.

"I do think Holliston is Mudville," he said. "But I also think Stockton is Mudville and Philadelphia is Mudville and any town or city that has had a baseball team is Mudville. We are all Mudvilians."

Hulbert continues to seek new research avenues, but also realizes she does not want to find a lost Golden Letter from Thayer.

"I think it's far better we don't know for sure because we keep the legend going," she said. "We take some poetic license as well."

Thayer died in 1940, so he would not have seen the carved granite marker in Blair's front yard. At the bottom it bears a twist on a familiar line.

"There is joy in Mudville."

(Michael Morton can be reached at mmorton@cnc.com or 508-626-4338.)

2010 VBBA CONFERENCE

Make your plans now to go to Port Huron at the end of March, 2010 for the VBBA conference. A registration form and more information follows the front page of the newsletter.

READERS:

Please send me information about upcoming events to include in the newsletter.

Thanks, Dave Brooks

The Early Riser BBC of Detroit—the First Season

Submitted by Rob “Hurricane” McCallum, Club Captain

What went right:

The first season for the Early Risers was a resounding success! The club was but a vague notion I had in the summer of 2008. By October of that year, we had collected a few very enthusiastic players, including a field captain, Rj “Snurek” Chadha, and an equipment captain, Eric “Igor” Garza. We had also begun our search for a place to play and a club identity. In November, the *Detroit News* ran an article about the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition, a nonprofit volunteer group that maintains a mid-19th century star fort in Detroit. I had one of those “that’s it!” moments. I hadn’t even realized the fort was still open for visitors. I immediately sent an email to the Coalition’s chairman, Tom Berlucchi. He was aware of the VBBA, mentioned that vintage ball games were held at the fort from time to time, and loved the idea of Fort Wayne having its own permanent ball club. So, not only did we gain a place to play, it was actual historical ground—complete with sally ports and a barracks building that once housed Civil War soldiers! It was decided that all the players would join the Coalition. The organization would help support us, but we would be members also. The Coalition would provide the grounds (including modern bathroom facilities), grounds keeping and other support functions. The ball club, in turn, would help draw visitors and attention to the fort.

In January 2009, we decided that our club would be the Early Risers. It was a logical choice—they’d existed in 1859 and 1860,

held their practices on Campus Martius (a site downtown associated with the Civil War), and disbanded when half of their players joined the Union army. This tied the club in nicely with the military aspect of Fort Wayne, and it is very possible that some original Early Risers even passed through the fort before being deployed. After choosing our name, we then turned our focus to recruiting more players by word of mouth. We also began planning uniforms. Fortune would have it that our field captain’s wife Louise (“Stitches”) is a seamstress, so she made our uniforms. This not only cut down on cost, but also made it possible to have alterations and repairs done quickly. Throughout the season, she also created pennants with our logo for the foul poles and jerseys for the players’ kids.

Prior to the Early Risers, I had played for three seasons at The Henry Ford. When I emailed Brian “Gettysburg” Egen that I wouldn’t be returning and that I was forming a new club, he invited the Early Risers to the World Tournament at Greenfield Village. Playing there was a great experience, and we were presented with the Henry Chadwick Sportsmanship Award. As well, we were given the bag of peanuts award for losing the most tournament games! Prior to the tournament, Marcus “Razorback” Dickson of the Lah-De-Dahs/Nationals had noticed that the 2009 tournament began 150 years to the day of the first regulation match ever played in Detroit. That original match took place August 8, 1859, between the Early Risers and the Detroit BBC. To honor the occasion, he arranged to have the

Greenfield Village Nationals suit up as the Detroit BBC for our match with them!

While starting our club, we found it really helps to talk to someone who’s had some experience doing it. Greg “Rudy” Powell from the Wyandotte Stars had contacted me in February, and he provided a lot of valuable advice about different aspects of running a club, including the fact that, in most cases, it is expected that the home club provide a lunch for its visitors after the match. We also were able to schedule several matches with the Stars, which included a game at Ned Skeldon Stadium in Toledo (the former Toledo Mud Hens AAA ball field), where we got to play on the same field where so many great ball players had played.

Other things that went right our first season included a match we were invited to play with the Northville Eclipse to help raise money to fight Lou Gehrig’s Disease. Not only did we help to raise money for a worthy cause, we were also featured in a front page news article, complete with pictures.

The dedication to the club that our players developed was really a highlight of the year. A few days before our first inside-the-fort match, several players went down to the fort to weed whack the hills overlooking the field to make sure the place looked great, and to build barrier boards to protect the barracks’ windows. As well, there was also a day when some of our players organized a pickup game with a group of middle school students who were visit-

ing Fort Wayne. We played ball with those kids (and even some of their teachers) for hours, right inside the star fort. Hopefully, the kids will carry that memory with them for a long time.

But ultimately, the biggest thing that went right for the Early Risers this season was that we fielded a club made up of a great group of ballists who are enthusiastic about the vintage game and its history.

What we could've done better:

The Early Risers came together very quickly, which was a positive thing in that it says something about the will to make it happen. However, it also meant that there were so many things happening that a totally cohesive plan wasn't in place. Only a week before the VBBA convention in March, I still had doubts that we would be ready by June. We still didn't have enough players, half of the guys that said they wanted to play three months earlier had backed out—which caused problems such as knowing how many hats to order.

One of our core issues was budget. We didn't have any money at all. We'd initially worked up a budget estimate (which we subsequently trimmed significantly). Players paid \$225 each (\$20 for Coalition membership, \$40 toward equipment, and the balance for the uniform). We hoped that would get us started. If we had 15 players, we would break even. We ended up with 12 and so had debt (which will carry over into 2010).

We also had no budget for the after-game lunches. Fortunately, all but two of our matches were away. So for those home games, we had potlucks where we grilled

hot dogs and each player brought a dish. This was more out-of-pocket expense for players. We are currently looking at ways to fundraise for 2010, but it's definitely something we should have put more thought into in the beginning.

We played nine matches in 2009. By the time we knew we were going to have a club, most clubs had long since scheduled their season. Actually, though, that turned out to be a good thing. Because we didn't have a lot of players, it was sometimes difficult to even field nine. We were never short, but we played a couple games with only nine and sometimes even had to find a sub.

One other thing that became apparent is the importance of designating responsibilities. There's too much set-up work for two or three people. As the season progressed, we developed a council with positions, including club captain, field captain, equipment captain and treasurer. We also have someone that created and maintains a Facebook site and someone that organizes the potlucks, and we hope to designate other responsibilities for future endeavors such as writing a newsletter. In 2010, we hope to formalize duties and positions and also create a mission statement and by-laws.

Ah, the losing...

As a start-up club, we expected to not be very good. Most of our players had played baseball before, some even at the college level. But only two had ever played vintage base ball. We held scheduled practices before our first match, but we didn't plan them for after our season started. In our first week of playing, we

played two matches. In the first, we were defeated, but it wasn't awful and we scored some tallies. In the second, we were completely shelled. We then realized we had to add practices. Because these weren't part of the original plan though, not everyone could commit to them.

We generally improved from match to match, and we had our bright moments. But new players should be mentally prepared that every club they face has far more experience than they do. When frustration set in, we sometimes had to remind ourselves that the reasons we play vintage base ball are for love of the game, gentlemanly sportsmanship and camaraderie.

Ready for 2010

Our goals for our first season were to field a uniformed team of guys who wanted to play vintage base ball, find a home and a club identity, and to play some games. We met and exceeded all three. Not only did we play in some great games and establish a relationship with a fantastic historic site, but we really embraced the spirit and the history of the Early Risers.

For 2010, we are looking to play a full schedule (which we have already scheduled), to improve our skills, to expand our roster and to establish a greater media presence. We are really looking forward to drawing more public attention to vintage base ball, historic Fort Wayne and the city of Detroit.

IF YOUR TEAM IS JUST STARTING AND WOULD LIKE TO SHARE A RECAP OF YOUR FIRST YEAR, CONTACT THE EDITOR

JERSEY CITY SKEETERS

This past season, Dave Kerans resurrected the Jersey City Skeeters in Jersey City, NJ to play according to the customs of the first decade of the 20th century. They also played against teams playing 19th century rules, so a lot of their matches followed rules many of us are familiar with and play during our matches. Dave summarized his season and reported that he had positives and negatives in this first year. Because of the expense of getting the team equipped (about \$5,000), money was a big factor in getting started. Dave Kerans spent a lot of time and effort to finding equipment on eBay and getting some of it retrofitted. And then some of the equipment used by players did not get returned to Dave. He mentioned all the things a team needs to have, such as uniforms, insurance, scheduling, historical research, website creation, etc. During the season, Dave was plagued by players who were not committed to playing. Some were hurt, some had changes in work schedules, others felt they were not qualified to play. Toward the end of the Skeeters' season replacement players joined the club and are looking to bring others with them for the 2010 season. Best of luck in the coming year, Skeeters!

Dave Brooks

Member Profiles wanted for future issues of the VBBA Newsletter. Nominate someone you want to know more about.

PLAYING YOUR POSITION – advice from days of yore.

From The Base-Ball Guide for 1869 (The Revised Rules of the Game, with an Explanatory Appendix to Each Rule, Together with Instructions for Young Players and Hints to Professionals)

Edited by Henry Chadwick

Published by Robert M. De Witt, Publisher, New York, page 42. The text is as follows:

THE THIRD BASE

Whose position is as important and is more laborious than either of the other bases. The third baseman, besides being an active fielder, should be a quick and accurate long thrower; he should not be afraid of swiftly-batted or thrown balls, and should possess all the other requisites for a good base player. He should play back of his base toward left field; should be ready to runs for balls batted "foul" to the left; should be nimble in stooping to pick up ground balls, and should throw the ball well and quickly to the first baseman. When the circumstances of the moment oblige the short stop to play second base, the third baseman should attend to the duties of short stop. When a player is on third base attempting to run to home base, the third baseman should watch his opportunity to catch the runner before he secures his run. When the ball is being passed in from the direction of right-field to the pitcher, the third baseman should "back up" the pitcher, so that if by any chance the ball should be passed or missed by the latter, he could stop it before any

player running the bases could take advantage of the mishap. The remarks concerning double and triple plays will apply to the third baseman as much as to either of the other base-players.

Although the positions mentioned are—each in itself—important, the most important of the in-field, and perhaps of the entire field, is that of
THE SHORT-STOP,

EDITORS NOTE:

At this point in the text of the Base-Ball Guide, Chadwick goes on to discuss the position of shortstop. You will have to wait for the next issue of the newsletter to read about the "most important" position. This series of excerpts will continue on through the nine positions of the game at a rate of one position per newsletter.

Readers, here is a question from me to you about one of Mr. Chadwick's comments. He says that ***When the circumstances of the moment oblige the short stop to play second base, the third baseman should attend to the duties of short stop.*** Can anyone comment on what Chadwick means by this comment? Is he saying that the third baseman should play in the short stop position when the short stop is on the right side of the infield? As a player of limited experience, I do not understand what is expected of the third baseman.

Please send me your comments and share what you think about this question.

Thanks, Dave B=

The Detroit Free Press printed this box score along with a description of the game in the August 21, 1882 edition. If anyone asks for it, the text will be printed in the next newsletter.. Dave B=

THE SCORE:																		
DETROIT																		
	A.B.	R.	B.H.	T.B.	P.O.	A.	E.											
Wood, l. f.....	7	0	1	1	4	1	0											
Hanlon, c. f.....	7	0	1	1	4	0	0											
Powell, 1 b.....	7	0	1	1	21	0	1											
Bennett, 3 b.....	7	0	1	2	3	4	2											
Trott, c.....	7	0	2	2	13	1	1											
Knight, r. f.....	6	0	0	0	1	1	0											
Weldman, p.....	6	0	1	2	2	12	0											
Whitney, s. s.....	6	0	2	2	1	11	0											
Foster, 2 b.....	6	0	0	0	2	4	2											
Totals.....	59	0	9	11	51	34	6											
PROVIDENCE																		
	A.B.	R.	B.H.	T.B.	P.O.	A.	E.											
Hines, c. f.....	7	0	1	1	1	1	0											
Farrell, 2 b.....	7	0	1	1	7	9	1											
Start, 1 b.....	7	0	0	0	25	1	1											
Ward, p.....	7	0	1	1	2	5	0											
York, l. f.....	7	0	1	1	3	0	0											
Radbourne, r. f.....	7	1	1	4	1	0	0											
Wright, s. s.....	6	0	1	3	2	5	1											
Denny, 3 b.....	6	0	2	2	4	11	1											
Nava, c.....	6	0	0	0	9	1	1											
Totals.....	60	1	8	13	54	33	5											
Innings.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Detroit.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Providence.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Earned runs-Providence, 1																		
Home run - Radbourne																		
Three-base hit - Wright																		
Two-base hits - Bennett, Weldman																		
First base on errors - Detroit, 2; Providence, 2																		
First base on called balls - Knight																		
Passed balls - Trott, 1; Nava, 1																		
Struck out - Detroit, 3; Providence, 5																		
Muffed fly - Bennett																		
Muffed thrown balls - Foster, 2; Powell, Start																		
Wild throws - Bennett, Trott, Nava, Wright, Denny																		
Umpire - Bradley																		
Attendance - 1,118																		

ERIC MIKLICH SENDS THE NEWSLETTER “CRAZY BASEBALL RULES”

The majority of baseball fans and historians generally possess little knowledge, if any, regarding 19th century base ball and its development. The version that is played today, a variation of the “New York Game,” underwent tremendous alterations since 1845, which included numerous changes to the playing rules and the layout of the field. During this time rules that would be deemed odd today, were part of the development of the sport and were all instituted so as to maintain a balance between the batter and pitcher as well as the offensive and defensive.

Unless a reputable source or author is discussing 19th century base ball, a reader (in this instance) should not regard information presented as fact and question the validity of the data. Writer’s Note – I can only hope to be a reputable source!

A posting on the ‘1860vintagebaseball’ list-serve regarding “crazy baseball rules” contained a web site that attempted to explain hand picked unusual playing rules from the 19th century. The author’s explanations provided little facts. I do understand that humor was part of the agenda; however, not every reader would be able to decipher fact, fiction and comedy, although most should.

In the original article, the opening statement was followed by a narrative in which the author attempted to present information supporting the headline. Most of the narrative was misleading and I included only a very, very small sampling.

The article can be found at the following web site - <http://jockandballs.com/2009/09/08/10-craziest-baseball-rules/>

10 Craziest Baseball Rules

10. Pitchers Could Cover Balls With Just About Anything

True. There were no rules as to what could be done to a ball in the 19th century.

9. Balls And Strikes Didn’t Really Exist

The following accompanied this entry:

“In 1887, walks were even considered hits. And that was also the first year that batters were awarded first base if they got hit by a pitch.”

The first part is accurate except the author fails to mention that 1887 was the only year that walks were considered hits.

The 1887 season was not the first in which batters were given their base after being hit by a pitched ball. Beginning in 1884, the American Association awarded the batter hit by a pitched ball, first base as long as he was hit solidly in the eyes of the umpire and did so on the run.

This entry was also written.

“Called strikes didn’t even exist until 1858. And until 1863, base runners would run advance on foul balls.” (sic)

The first part is true. The second part is absolutely insane. Base runners could not advance on foul batted balls until the 1876 season and even then it depended if the ball was caught on the fly or the first bounce.

Dewitt’s Base Ball Guide for 1876 lists the following on foul ball advancement in the section “Rule VI. – Running The Bases.”

Running on Fly Balls.

10 - No base shall be run or run be scored when a fair or foul ball has been caught or momentarily held before touching the ground, unless the base held when the ball was hit is retouched by the base runner after the ball has been so caught or held by the fielder.

This is the same rule that we are all

used to playing modern baseball.

Now remember that a foul batted ball was allowed to be caught on the first bounce for an out in the National League through the 1882 season and through the 1884 season of the American Association. The Union Association did not allow this during its only season of operation in 1884.

Returning on Foul Balls.

11 – No run or base can be made on a foul ball that shall touch the ground before being caught or held by a fielder, and any player running bases shall return, without being put out, to the base he occupied when the ball was struck, and remain on such a base until the ball is held by the pitcher.

****Eric’s rule explanation - A base runner or runners standing on their base while the ball is in the possession of the pitcher after a foul batted ball is caught on the bounce, makes the ball live again. These simultaneous acts allows for advancement by the base runner or runners.**

12 – Any player running the bases on a fair or foul balls caught before touching the ground must return to the base he occupied when the ball was struck, and retouch such base before attempting to make another or score a run, and said player shall be liable to be put out in so returning, as in the case of running to first base when a fair ball is hit and not caught on the fly.

It was advantageous for the fielding team to catch a foul batted ball on the first bounce in order to keep base runners from advancing.

8. Catchers Had Zero Protection

This is absolutely false. Catchers were wearing a form of a glove in the 1870’s. Jim Tyng, a Harvard College base ball player, has been credited with inventing the catchers mask in 1875 when he modified a fencing mask.

7. Pitchers Used To ‘Throw’ From 45

ERIC'S "RULES" cont'd.

Feet

True, beginning in 1857 and ending after the 1880 season. A photo accompanied this entry and was from 1885 or 1886, which makes the front line of the pitcher's box 50' from the center of home base. The author fails to explain the progression of the pitching distance through 1893, when the distance became what we are familiar with today.

6. Hitters Had Flat Bats

True for a short period only, beginning in 1887 and ended in 1892.

5. Pitchers Couldn't Step Towards The Plate When They Threw

Completely false. This falls in the category of those who interpret the 1867 batting rule of the batter not being able to move his feet during an at-bat.

A pitcher required to have both feet on the ground when delivering the ball to the bat does not mean that a step was illegal. It means that both feet had to be on the ground when the ball was released.

Regarding the batting rule that I mentioned, the rule stated that the batter could not step, "when in the act of striking, shall not step forward or backward..." This simply stopped batters from running forward, as is done today in modern day arc softball. The 1868 Beadle's Guide rules specifically state that the 1867 rule was confusing and explain that only during a batter's swing was his movement to be restricted.

4. Hitters Got Nine Balls Before They Walked

This is true; however, the author leads the reader to believe that this was always the case. Technically only the 1876 through 1879 seasons would fall into this category.

3. Base Runners Didn't Have To

Touch Every Base

False. This was first addressed in the rules for 1861; Sec 19.

"SEC. 19. Players running the bases must, so far as possible, keep upon the direct line between the bases; and, must make them in the following order, viz: first, second, third, and home, and if returning must reverse this order. Should any player run three feet out of this line for the purpose of avoiding the ball in the hands of an adversary, he shall be declared out."

2. Batters Could Call For The Type Of Pitch They Wanted

Misleading. The batter was allowed to announce, before each at bat, the location of where he wanted the ball delivered. A "low" pitch ranged from his knees to his belt and a "high" pitch, from his belt to his shoulders.

This was the case beginning with the 1871 NA season and lasting until the league folded after the completion of the 1875 season. The NL, AA continued with this rule until the start of the 1887 when the two leagues used the same set of rules. The UA instituted this rule during their only season in 1884.

1. Pitchers Threw Underhand

Misleading. The term "underhand" is subjective in the 19th century. Forms of underhand pitching were used prior to 1867, which was the first year that the rules specifically addressed the position of the pitcher's arm during a delivery. Beginning in 1872, pitchers were allowed a side-armed motion. True side-arm was allowed at the start of the 1874 season, with the ball required to be released below the waist. In the second half of the 1882 (NL) season, pitchers were allowed to deliver the ball

above the waist but below the shoulder, as they consistently circumvented the below the waist delivery. When the American Association began operation in 1882, above the waist and below the shoulder delivery was the norm, which officials lifted on 7/6/1885 and allowed above the shoulder delivery. The National League allowed an above the shoulder delivery in the second half of the 1883 season when umpires were unable to enforce the written rules. During the lone UA season of 1884, pitchers were required to deliver the ball above the waist but below the shoulder.

RULES FORUM

Eric was kind enough to submit the preceding discussion of someone's opinion of the rules. Thanks for the giving the benefit of your knowledge of the rules, Eric.

Readers, does this rules discussion bring any questions to mind? Is one of these items something you would want to learn more about? Do you have any other issues about rules and how they are interpreted? I have one to relate. Here is what happened to me recently:

I was playing in a vintage match at another team's grounds and became embroiled in a discussion about whether a runner from the third base should have his ace tallied. As the discussion ensued, I'm afraid I did not act completely as a gentleman. A gentleman would not have questioned the arbiter and the host about how they interpreted a rule. I should have engaged them in a discussion after the fact. The play should have been unquestioned as it occurred. The match should have been uninterrupted. My apologies to all involved in this event.

Ladies & Gentlemen—Respect the Game

Readers, any other opinions or questions about rules? Send them to the editor.

The Base Ball Player's Chronicle

The newsletter of the Vintage Base Ball Association

Contents:

VBBA Board Meeting report

2010 VBBA Conference

Bill Phillips—Old Time Ball Player

Member Profile—Gary Hetzel

How to Market your Team

Cold Weather Base Ball

Old Time Team—Bay City Independents

Club Profile—The Essex Base Ball Organization

Upcoming Events

First year Team—Early Riser BBC of Detroit; Jersey City Skeeters

Advice from Mr. Chadwick—Third Base

1882 Box Score

Rules Comments

New Organizations forming

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