

## **What Was The Massachusetts Game, Anyway? A Sourced-Based Description of Massachusetts Game Play**

One of the best known American baseball variants of the first half of the nineteenth century, the Massachusetts Game is frequently mentioned in secondary historical sources. Often mentioned, along with town ball, as a baseball variant that competed with and was supplanted by the New York game, the Massachusetts Game is usually described in some detail in these sources. A square infield and four-foot tall, wooden stakes used as base markers are commonly mentioned aspects of game play, with the implication being that the game was somehow alien and the New York game was the more natural form of baseball. Even the name given to it, the Massachusetts Game, is odd and doesn't reflect the nature of the game as names such as baseball, football or basketball does. All of the ways in which historians have presented information about the Massachusetts Game has highlighted the ways in which it was different from the modern game of baseball, creating a sense of strangeness that a modern observer has difficulty overcoming.

However, when looking at contemporary sources describing the Massachusetts Game, one sees something much different than what is described in the secondary sources. First, it becomes apparent that there was a great deal of variety in the game play. In thirty-five sources, there is no agreement on what the game was called, how many players made up a side, what the distance was between bases or even how many catchers were positioned behind the batter. While we have four complete sets of rules describing game play, we also have several sources that make it clear that the rules were open to negotiation and that any aspect of game play could be changed if the players agreed to it. In this sense, the game was much like town ball, in that who and how many played shaped the nature of the game. Secondly, when looking at the contemporary sources, we find that the game has a great deal in common with modern baseball. There is pitching, batting, base-running, fielding and catching. There are innings. There is a three-strikes-and-you're-out rule. The dropped third strike rule was used. There is so much of the game that is familiar to us that the square infield and stakes used as bases become almost irrelevant idiosyncrasies rather than defining aspects of game play. The Massachusetts Game is simply not as well-defined or as alien as modern historians have described it.

One of the reasons that modern historians erroneously describe the Massachusetts Game is because they define it wrong. In general, historians have defined the game according to the 1858 rules of the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players. Any game played according to these rules was, by definition, the Massachusetts Game and that's absolutely correct. But this is a rather narrow definition and doesn't address the true nature and history of the game. According to testimony given to the Mills Commission, the game was played in New England at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and we know that ball-playing in the area goes back to the arrival of Europeans. What we find in the source material presented here is the evolution of a Massachusetts or New England baseball variant over the course of thirty plus years. The game didn't begin with the 1858 Dedham rules but appeared generations earlier when it was known simply as

base ball or round ball. Any definition of the Massachusetts Game has to embrace the base ball variants from which the 1858 rules evolved. The MABBP did not, like Athena, spring forth, fully formed, from the head of Zeus but was the product of a rich ball-playing culture and the game play variations that we see in the contemporary sources is an example of that culture. What's interesting is that both the Massachusetts and New York game most likely evolved from a group of common base ball games but they each took the same raw material and produced something that, while similar, was completely unique. Any attempt to understand the Massachusetts Game must take into account that history, evolution, similarity and uniqueness.

Presented below are thirty-five sources that detail at least one aspect of game play of the Massachusetts Game. Twenty-seven of these sources date from 1864 or earlier and nine predate the 1857 Dedham rules. There is also a summary of the descriptions of game play found in the sources that attempts to organize the information found in the sources. This is in no way to be considered an exhaustive list of all references that describe the Massachusetts Game in detail and there's no doubt that there are references yet to be found that could add to our understanding of the game but this is still a great deal of rich information about a game that is largely defined, popularly, by a square infield and wooden stakes.

### **Summary of the description of Massachusetts round ball play found in the source material:**

Note: The sources are numbered and all citations in brackets are a reference to those numbers. 10(d) refers to the 1858 Dedham rules and 11(o) refers to the 1857 Olympic Club rules.

#### **What was the game called?**

The game was referred to as base ball [2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10(d), 11(o), 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 28], round ball [1, 6, 7, 14, 18, 32, 33], ball [3, 5, 15, 20, 29, 31, 35], goal ball [1], bat and ball [30], base [1], and the Massachusetts game [27]. Several references refer to the game by two or more different names in the same source [1, 6, 7, 14].

#### **Who played the game?**

Several sources mention that the game was played by both men and boys [34, 35]. One source stated that the games were segregated by age [34].

Numerous sources mention organized clubs [5, 8, 9, 10(d), 11(o), 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 34]. One source stated that there were no organized clubs prior to 1854 [30].

#### **Where was the game played?**

One source mentions that the game was to be played on an ordinary field [11(o)], one mentioned playing in a park [22] and another mentioned playing in town centers [35]. Several mentioned playing on Boston Common [4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 34].

It was specifically mentioned in two sources that the game was played not just in Massachusetts but throughout New England [11(o), 31].

### **How were games or matches arranged?**

Several sources note that games were arranged by invitation [3, 30] or challenge [3, 4, 15, 18, 20]. Several source mentioned informal games [30, 34, 35].

### **When were matches played?**

One source mentioned that games were played on holidays [30, 35] and on Saturday afternoon [35]. It was also mentioned that adults would play or practice after work [35]. One source mentioned games played before breakfast [30].

### **How were sides chosen?**

There are several references to sides chosen at random [1, 2, 11(o), 28]. Teams put together by organized clubs are frequently mentioned [5, 8, 9, 10(d), 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 34]. One source mentioned that anyone who wanted could play in a game [34].

### **How many players made up a side?**

In the sources, the number of players that made up a side varied greatly. Twelve players per side was the number most often mentioned [16, 17, 19, 22]. One source stated that at least a dozen players were needed, implying six per side [32]. Another source mentioned six to eight players per side, with eight being considered a full team [7]. According to one source ten or twelve players were needed per side and there could be up to fifteen [11(o)], while another mentioned that ten to fourteen were needed [10(d)] and yet another specifically stated that there were fourteen to a side [33]. Still another source said that twenty-five men made up a side [3].

One source noted that there was no set number that could make up a side [2] and another mentioned that the sides did not necessarily have to be even [11(o)].

### **What was the role of each side?**

Each team took a turn batting while the other pitched/defended [1, 2, 11(o)].

Which team batted first and which went into the field was determined by chance [1].

### **The Field:**

Several sources stated that there was no foul territory and the entire field was in play [27, 31, 32, 33, 34].

According to one source, the field was roped off [30].

### **Bats:**

Several sources specifically mention that bats were to be used to strike the ball [1, 2]. Several sources describe that homemade bats were used [7, 35] and several describe the bat as round [10(d), 34] and wooden [10(d)]. One source stated that the bat had to be three to three and a half feet in length [7] and one stated that it could not exceed two and a half inches in diameter [10(d)]. Two sources mentioned flat bats [30, 34] and one mentioned flat bats that were twelve to fifteen inches long [34]. One source specifically stated that a round bat was used [11(o)].

### **Balls:**

The ball was often described as being homemade [7, 11(o), 30, 31, 33, 34, 35]; having a cork [7, 11(o), 31], rubber [7, 11(o), 30, 31, 34] or buckshot [34] center; wound with yarn [7, 30, 31, 34]; and covered with leather [7, 10(d), 11(o), 30, 31, 34]. One source specifically stated that the ball had to be at least two ounces but not more than two and three-quarter ounces and that it had to be at least six and a half inches but not larger than eight and a half inches in circumference [10(d)]. Two sources described the ball as heavier than a regulation baseball [27, 34].

One source specifically mentioned a ball that had a bullet as the core [30].

### **Bases:**

Numerous sources noted that there were four bases [1, 2, 10(d), 11(o), 27, 28, 33, 34]. Sources note that stones [1, 2] and stakes [1, 10(d), 23, 30, 33, 34] were used as bases. One noted that the stakes should be wooden and project four feet from the ground [10(d)] and another five feet above the ground [34].

Bases were sometimes referred to as goals [2, 33], bounds [30] or byes [30].

### **The arrangement of the bases:**

Two sources note that the bases were laid out in a diamond [1, 2]. Several sources state that they were to be arranged in a square [10(d), 11(o), 33].

### **Distance between bases:**

One source states that bases were to be placed twelve to twenty yards apart [1]. Another specified sixty feet between each base [10(d)]. One source called for fifty feet between

first and second and third and home with forty feet between second and third and home and first [11(o)].

### **The Defense:**

The defensive positioning of the out-side was random [2, 11(o)]. One source [33] mentioned that there were back fielders who stood behind the hitter and catcher, fielders at every base and a fielder between second and third base.

### **Gloves:**

One source mentioned that the players wore heavy gloves [30].

### **Pitchers and pitching:**

The pitcher stood closer to home than to the center of the infield [1] according to one source, while others stated that he was to stand in the center [2, 11(o)]. One source specifically stated that the pitcher was to stand thirty-five feet from the batter [10(d)] while two stated that he stood thirty feet from the batter [11(o), 33]. Another source mentioned that one team pitched from forty feet while the other pitched from twenty feet [6].

One source noted that the pitcher had to stand in a designated area that was square-shaped [33].

One source stated that the ball was to be tossed gently [1, 2]. Most sources described the ball as being thrown by the pitcher [10(d), 11(o), 23, 25, 27, 28, 34].

One source stated that the ball was to be thrown by the pitcher to the bat in a location chosen by the batter [10(d)].

The pitcher, in one source, was described as the thrower [10(d)].

### **Catchers:**

Several sources mention one catcher located behind the batter [10(d), 11(o), 31]. However, there are two sources that mention two catchers behind the batter [2, 31] and one mentions three [33].

The catcher, according to two sources, was not to enter the space occupied by the batter [10(d), 11(o),]. One source, noting a protest over the movement of the catcher behind the batter's position, implies that the catcher was not allowed to move from a set position [6]. Another source mentioned that the catcher had to remain on his feet while catching the ball [10(d)].

### **Substitutions:**

Substitutions were not allowed unless a player was disabled or by consent of the opposing team [10(d)].

Pitchers and catchers, according to one source, were to keep their position unless they specifically chose to give it up [7]. Another source stated that both the pitcher and the catcher should be changed every three innings to allow others an opportunity to play the position [11(o)].

One source noted that players could be added to a game with the mutual consent of the sides [11(o)].

### **Batters and batting:**

The batter, in one of the sources that had a diamond-shaped infield, stood at home plate [2]. In a square-shaped infield, the batter's position was between first and fourth base [10(d), 11(o), 27, 33]. Several sources stated that the batter was to stand in a designated batting area that was four feet in diameter [10(d), 11(o), 33].

The batter was to attempt to strike a pitched ball with a bat [1, 2, 11(o)]. The bat was to be dropped after the ball was struck and as the batter attempted to advance to the first base [1].

Several sources mentioned rear or back-hitting [31, 33, 34] and one mentioned side-hitting [33].

One source described the batter as the striker [10(d)].

The batter, according to one source, was allowed to call for where the ball was pitched to him [10(d)].

Several sources noted that a specific batting order had to be maintained [10(d), 11(o)].

### **Base-running:**

If the ball was struck, the batter had to attempt to run the bases [2]. One source notes that the bases were run clockwise [1] and others that they were run counter-clockwise [2, 11(o)]. Only one base-runner could occupy a base at a time [1, 10(d), 11(o)]. Base-runners could not pass another base-runner [1].

Several sources mention that if the third strike was dropped, the batter was allowed to run and attempt to reach his base [10(d), 11(o)].

One source stated that a runner could not overrun first base [33].

Another source noted that a base-runner was considered safe if he was within a foot of the base [11(o)].

### **Runs:**

One source notes that after a player made the circuit of four bases, a run was scored [10(d), 11(o)].

Numerous sources refer to a run-scored as a tally [5, 10(d), 11(o), 18, 19, 20, 26, 33]. One source notes that runs were called crosses [4].

### **Outs:**

Three failed attempts to strike the ball was an out [1, 2, 10(d), 11(o)]. Balls caught on the fly were out [1, 2, 10(d), 11(o), 15, 27]. A common feature of the game was plugging, whereby if a runner, while off a base, was hit with a thrown ball, he was out [1, 2, 10(d), 11(o), 27, 28, 31, 32 33, 35]. One source mentions a six strikes/out rule [6]. One source mentioned that a ball caught on the bound was out [11(o)].

### **How was a side put out?**

Numerous sources note that a side was put out after everyone on the side made an out (all-out/side-out) [1, 2, 6, 28]. Other sources state that the side was put out when one out was made (one-out/all-out) [10(d), 11(o), 15, 27].

One source mentioned a Lazarus rule, whereby the in-side could recover players who had already been put out [28].

Another source described a variation called one-out/one-out or “each for himself” [11(o)].

### **Innings and breaks:**

Several sources describe a game divided into innings [11(o), 17, 18, 22, 24, 26]. One source stated that an even number of innings had to be played [18] and another stated that a game was made up of twenty-five innings [17].

Several sources mentioned that clubs would suspend the game and take a break from play [20, 22, 26]. Often, a break was taken for lunch [20].

Several sources mention that a match took multiple days to complete [22].

### **How was a game won?**

Many sources state that the first team to 100 runs was the victor [5, 10(d), 12, 13, 16, 20, 23, 33]. Another mentioned that a match was won by the first team to twenty-five runs

[8, 9] and implies that a team had to win the best of three [8] or the best of five matches to be declared the winner. One source mentioned a game where the winner was the first club to sixty-five runs [18]. Another match was won when a club reached fifty runs [19]. One source stated that the game was played until an agreed upon number of runs were scored [11(o)].

### **Was there an understood set of rules to the game?**

There were several contemporary books that laid out the rules of the game [1, 2, 11(o)] and there were also the rules of the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players [10(d), 21, 24]. There is also a reference to a proper set of rules [6].

One source stated that the rules of the game were negotiated between clubs [15] and that various rule sets were used in different places [15]. There are two sources that state or imply that clubs had their own specific rule sets [30, 11(o)].

Another stated that there were no regular rules [29] and one said there were no regular rules or prior to 1854 [30].

One source noted that the rules could be changed during a match if both sides agreed [11(o)].

### **Umpires:**

Numerous sources mention that umpires were used to enforce the rules [11(o), 22]. One source mentions judges [4, 20] and another referees [10(d), 17, 19, 26]. Several sources mention that three umpires or judges [4, 10(d), 17, 21, 22, 26, 33] were used for a game. Many of these sources note that when the three umpire system was used one umpire was to be chosen by each club and the third was to be chosen by mutual agreement [10(d), 17, 21, 22]. One version of the three umpire system consisted of the two team captains and a third party chosen at random in case the captains couldn't come to an agreement [11(o)].

The umpire was allowed to call strikes on the batter [10(d)].

The decisions of the umpire were final and binding [10(d)].

One source mentioned that there were no umpires [34].

### **Scorekeepers:**

Numerous sources mention scorekeepers, although most refer to them as tallymen [10(d), 22, 26] or game keepers [19]. Several sources noted that when three scorekeepers were used, one was chosen by each club and one was agreed upon by mutual consent [10(d), 22, 26].

### **Social aspects of game-play:**



Several sources note a social component to the playing of the game [30]. A post-match dinner was common [4, 17, 22]. Many sources mention the presence of spectators at matches [5, 11(o), 17, 26, 30].

### **Playing for a prize:**

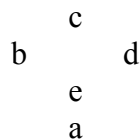
Several sources mention that the clubs played for some form of prize. There are several sources that mention clubs playing for money [20, 26, 30, 34] and another mentioned that they played for a dinner [24]. Another source specifically stated that the game was being played for a championship [22].

One source stated that a money prize was used to encourage another club to play a match [30].

### **Sources describing Massachusetts round ball play:**

#### **1. Base, Or Goal Ball.**

This game is known under a variety of names. It is sometimes called ‘round ball,’ but I believe [p 37] that ‘base,’ or ‘goal ball’ are the names generally adopted in our country. The players divide into two equal parties, and chance decides which shall have first innings. Four stones or stakes are placed from twelve to twenty yards asunder, as a, b, c, d, in the margin; another is put at e.



One of the party, who is out, places himself at e. He tosses the ball gently toward a, on the right of which one of the in-party places himself, and strikes the ball, if possible, with his bat. If he miss three times, or if the ball, when struck, be caught by any of the players of the opposite side, who are scattered about the field, he is out, and another takes his place. If none of these accidents take place, on striking the ball he drops the bat, and runs toward b, or, if he can, to c, d, or even to a again. If, however, the boy who stands at e, or any of the out-players who may happen to have the ball, strike him with it in his progress from a to b, b to c, c to d, or d to a, he is out. Supposing he can only get to b, one of his partners takes the bat, and strikes at the ball in [p 38] turn. If the first player can only get to c, or d, the second runs to b, only, or c, as the case may be, and a third player begins; as they get home, that is, to a, they play at the ball by turns, until they all get out. Then, of course, the out-players take their places. [p 39]

[Carver, Robin; The Book of Sports; Lily, Wait, Colman and Holden, 1834]

2. "Base ball" is played by a number, who are divided into two parties by the leader in each choosing one from among the players alternately. The leaders then toss up for innings. Four stones for gaols [sic] are then placed so as to form the four points of a diamond, as seen in the margin:



The party who are out then take their places; (see picture.) one stands near the centre of the diamond, to toss the ball for one of the in-party who stands with his bat at \*. Another stands behind the striker to catch the ball, if he fail to hit it. A third stands still farther behind, to return the ball when necessary. The remainder of the out-party are dispersed about the field to catch the ball when knocked, or to return it if not caught. If the striker miss the ball three times, or if he knock it and any of the opposite party catch it, he is out, and another of his party takes his place; if none of these accidents happen, the, on striking the ball, he drops his bat and runs to 2, or, if the ball be still at some distance, to 3, or 4, or even back to \*, according to circumstances; but he must be cautious how he ventures too far at a time, for any of the opposite party hit him with the ball while he is passing from one goal to another, he is out. When the first has struck the ball, another takes the bat and strikes and runs in like manner; then a third, and so on through the party, and as they arrive at \* one after another, each, who are not out, take their turns again, until all are out. Then, of course, the other party takes their places.

[The Boy's Book of Sports; New Haven; S. Babcock, 1835 (found in Baseball Before We Knew It; David Block; p 282)]

3. We understand that the Barre boys have extended an invitation to their friends in Petersham and Hardwick to play at ball in this town, next Saturday, (to-morrow) and the invitation has been accepted.

[Barre (MA) Patriot, August 17, 1855]

4. Ball Playing Between Hampden And Berkshire. – The ball players of Sandisfield and Otis, thinking themselves equal for almost all things, sent a challenge to the Tolland players for a match game in the former town, on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup>. Tolland accepted, and with twenty-five players on each side the game commenced, resulting in the complete triumph of the challenged or Tolland party, whose tally footed up 265 crosses, to 189 by the other side. An excellent supper following this, prepared by Mr. Wilcox and paid for by the conquered party, made all things pleasant again, if indeed the game had resulted in

any unpleasant feelings at all. The judges for the occasion were, Messrs. Strickland of Otis, Holibard of Winsted, Ct., and Baker of Granville. – Springfield Republican. [Sun (Pittsfield, MA), September 27, 1855]

5. In the morning there was a “glorious” game of ball on the common, which lasted three hours, and in which the Olympic Ball Club conquered the Green Mountain Boys. The game was for 100 tallies, and the Green Mountain Boys having won 98, did not consider themselves very badly beaten. There was a large crowd of spectators... [Boston Daily Atlas, May 15, 1856]

6. "EXCITING GAME OF BASE BALL. - The second trial game of Base Ball took place on the Boston Common, Wednesday morning, May 14th, between the Olympics and the Green Mountain Boys. The game was one hundred ins, and after three hours of exciting and hard playing, it was won by the Olympics, merely by two, the Green Mountain Boys counting 98 tallies. . . . The above match was witnessed by a very large assemblage, who seemed to take a great interest in it." [Protoball Chronology 1856.20; Albert S. Flye, "Exciting Game of Base Ball," New York Clipper Volume 4, number 5; May 25, 1856; page 35; Facsimile provided by Craig Waff, September 2008]

7. I find, on reading an extract from the rules of the game, taken from the bye-laws, rules, &c., of the Putnam Club, and published in the Spirit of Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, some matters so different as to the manner in which I myself learned and played the game from youth to manhood, that I have thought, perhaps, a statement of my experience as to the Yankee method of playing “Base,” or “Round” ball, as we used to call it, may not prove uninteresting.

The ball we used was, I should think, of the size and weight described by the Putnam Club rules, made of yarn, tightly wound round a lump of cork or Indian rubber, and covered with smooth calf-skin in quarters (as we quarter an orange), the seams closed snugly, and not raised, lest they should blister the hand of the thrower and the catcher; the bat round, varying from 3 to 3 ½ feet in length; a portion of a stout rake or pitchfork handle was most in demand; and wielded generally in one hand by muscular young players at the country schools, who rivaled each other in the hearty cracks they gave the ball.

There were from six to eight players upon each side, the latter number being considered a full complement.

The two best players upon each side – first and second mates, as they were called, by common consent – were the catcher and thrower. These retained their positions in the game, unless they chose to call some other player, upon their own side, to change places with them...

The ball was thrown, not pitched or tossed, as a gentleman who has seen “Base” played in New York tells me it is; it was thrown, and with vigor, too, that made it whistle through the air, and stop with a solid smack in the catcher’s hands, which he directly held in front of his face. I have frequently heard the catcher tell the thrower, and have made the same request myself when catching, to throw as swift as he wished, and aim for my face. One of these swiftly-delivered balls, when stopped by a skillful batsman, is sure to give the outmost scout employment, and the striker to go his rounds in safety, and score one tally as he reaches home.

The finest exhibition of skill in Base Ball playing is, I think, to witness the ball passed swiftly from “thrower” to “catcher,” who being experts, seldom allow it to fall to the ground, and scarcely move their feet from the position they occupy. The “pitching” or “tossing” of a ball towards the batsman is never practiced (in New England), except by the most juvenile players; and he who would occupy the post of honor as “catcher,” must be able to catch expertly a swiftly delivered ball, or he will be admonished of his inexpertness by a request from some player to “butter his fingers.”

[Letter of Bob Livley, published in Porter’s Spirit of the Times, December 27, 1856 (found in Baseball in the Garden of Eden; John Thorn; pp 110-11; also found in Baseball Before We Knew It; David Block; p 83)]

**8.** The match game of base ball between the Olympic and Bay State clubs, on the Common, yesterday, was witnessed by a large crowd of spectators, and continued for two hours and a half. It resulted in a victory for the Olympic, the “tally” in the two games being 25 and 25 for the Olympic, and 12 and 13 for the Bay State.  
[Boston Daily Advertiser, May 15, 1857]

**9.** The Olympic Ball Club of this city and the Massapoag Club of Sharon, played a match game of base ball on the Common yesterday afternoon. Neither the Olympics or the Massaboags had never been beaten before, and although there was nothing at stake except reputation, the contest was very narrow and close. The game was best three in five of twenty-five tallies each. The Sharon boys came off victorious in three straight games...  
[Boston Daily advertiser, June 30, 1857. George Kirsch has a reference to this game in Baseball in Blue & Gray (pp 4-5) and writes that “Each team had twelve men to a side, twenty-five runs were needed to win the game, and three victories decided the match.” He also states that it was the first game of “an informal Massachusetts championship tournament...”]

**10 (d).** Rules And Regulations Of The Game Of Base Ball

Adopted by the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players, held in Dedham, May 14, 1858. [Note: the convention began their meeting on May 13; rules adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup>.]

1. The Ball must weigh not less than two, nor more than two and three-quarters ounces, avoirdupois. It must measure not less than six and a half, nor more than eight and a half inches in circumference, and must be covered with leather.
2. The Bat must be round, and must not exceed two and a half inches in diameter in the thickest part. It must be made of wood, and may be of any length to suit the Striker.
3. Four Bases or Bounds shall constitute a round; the distance from each base shall be sixty feet.
4. The bases shall be wooden stakes, projecting four feet from the ground.
5. The Striker shall stand inside of a space of four feet in diameter, at equal distance between the first and fourth Bases.
6. The Thrower shall stand thirty-five feet from and on a parallel line with the Striker.
7. The Catcher shall not enter within the space occupied by the Striker, and must remain upon his feet in all cases while catching the Ball.
8. The Ball must be thrown - not pitched or tossed - to the Bat, on the side preferred by the Striker, and within reach of his Bat.
9. The ball must be caught flying in all cases.
10. Players must take their knocks in the order in which they are numbered; and after the first inning is played, the turn will commence with the player succeeding the one who lost on the previous inning.
11. The Ball being struck at three times and missed, and caught each time by a player on the opposite side, the Striker shall be considered out. Or, if the Ball be ticked or knocked, and caught on the opposite side, the Striker shall be considered out. But if the ball is not caught after being struck at three times, it shall be considered a knock, and the Striker obliged to run.
12. Should the Striker stand at the Bat without striking at good balls thrown repeatedly at him, for the apparent purpose of delaying the game, or of giving advantage to players, the referees, after warning him, shall call one strike, and if he persists in such action, two and three strikes; when three strikes are called, he shall be subject to the same rules as if he struck at three fair balls.
13. A player, having possession of the first Base, when the Ball is struck by the succeeding player, must vacate the Base, even at the risk of being put out; and when two players get on one Base, either by accident or otherwise, the player who arrived last is entitled to the Base.

14. If a player, while running the Bases, be hit with the Ball thrown by one of the opposite side, before he has touched the home bound, while off a Base, he shall be considered out.
15. A player, after running the four Bases, on making the home bound, shall be entitled to one tally.
16. In playing all match games, when one is out, the side shall be considered out.
17. In playing all match games, one hundred tallies shall constitute the game, the making of which by either Club, that Club shall be judged the winner.
18. Not less than ten nor more than fourteen players from each Club, shall constitute a match in all games.
19. A person engaged on either side, shall not withdraw during the progress of the match, unless he be disabled, or by the consent of the opposite party.
20. The Referees shall be chosen as follows: One from each Club, who shall agree upon a third made from some Club belonging to this Association, if possible. Their decision shall be final, and binding upon both parties.
21. The Tallymen shall be chosen in the same manner as the Referees.

[New York Clipper, May 29, 1858 (accessed at Glimpses Into Baseball History website of Brian McKenna <http://baseballhistoryblog.com/1706/massachusetts-association-of-base-ball-players/>; also at Baseball Almanac <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/ruletown.shtml>)]

**11.** Base Ball now the favorite game throughout New England, besides an ordinary field, requires only a ball, and a bat, or stick resembling a common rolling pin but not quite so heavy, and of the same size all the way down. The Ball is the common one used in the games played with ball except cricket and football; and it is composed of a centre of cork or India rubber covered over with worsted, wound tightly in all directions so as to make a sphere, and finally covered with stout sheep's skin, stitched in large sections.

The Game (One out all out) is played by first fixing four spots called "bases" at nearly equal distances, and marked by a stone or small plug. (See diagram.)

C  
A     S     D

50 ft. T

B C  
40 ft.

A,B,C,D Bases.  
S. Striker.  
T. Thrower.  
C. Catcher.

In the centre of this is another place (T) called “the seat” where the “feeder” or thrower stands, to give or throw the ball to the one who has the bat, and who stands at (S) in the diagram. Two sides are chosen, one of which goes “in” while the other is “out;” this being decided by tossing up the bat, first marking it or by the rules annexed. There should not be less than ten or twelve players in all and twenty or thirty are not too many. The “in” side begin by standing at (S), in the diagram called “the house,” one of them taking the bat, while the feeder who is one of the “out” party standing at his “seat,” throws the ball at or in a line with his bat, after calling “play.” The rest of the “out” party are distributed over the field round the outside of the bases (C), the catcher stands directly behind the striker at a distance of at least four feet to catch the ball and return it to the feeder. When the ball is thus given the batman’s object is to hit it far and low over the field and his side put out at once. First, if he fails to strike after three trials, and the ball is caught each time by the “out” side; secondly, if he strikes it and it is caught by any of the “out” side before it falls to the ground or after a single hop or rebound, or thirdly if he is struck on the body after leaving his base and while not standing at another base. The score is made by the “in” party as follows: - Each player after striking the ball runs to the first base A, then to B, C, and D, according to the distance he has knocked the ball, after passing D he calls “tally” and scores one, and if while running between the bases he is hit by the ball, his side is “out.” After one of the “in” party has hit the ball and dropped the bat another takes his place; and on receiving the ball he strikes it or fails as the case may be. The object of the catcher and the balance of the “out” party is to catch the ball when struck or to hit the strikers while running between the several bases.

#### Club Rules For Playing Base Ball.

1. In playing stated games of Base Ball a certain number of tallies shall be played for, (say 50) the marking of which by either side shall constitute a game.
2. Sides shall be selected in this manner: - The President, or in his absence the Director, shall designate two members who may toss for the choice of players; and if more than one game is played the choosers shall be varied in each successive game.

3. Each player, as he is chosen, shall take his stand beside the player preceding him, in order that no confusion may ensue as to who or who has not been chosen; and every member intending to participate in the game shall endeavor to stand in full view of the choosers while the match is forming.
4. The game, unless a special agreement is made previous to commencing, shall be what is termed "one out all out."
5. The players choosing shall have absolute control of their respective sides during the game, (subject, however, to these rules,) and shall designate the place which each player shall occupy; and it shall be their duty to vary their thrower and catcher at least as often as at the close of every third innings, in order to give those members who wish an opportunity to improve in throwing and catching.
6. If a sufficient number of members of the Club be not present at the time appointed for playing, persons not members may be chosen to make up the match, and the players so chosen shall retain their places until the game is played out; but in all cases members shall have the preference when present at the time of choosing.
7. If another player make his appearance on the ground after the game commenced, (the sides being even,) the party having the choice shall not take him on his side until another player arrives to mate him, unless by permission of the chooser on the opposite side; but if there be a vacancy on either side he may be taken to fill such vacancy simply by notifying the opposite chooser.
8. Four bases or bounds shall constitute a round; the distance from first to second and from third to fourth base shall not be less than fifty feet, and from first to fourth and second to third not less than forty feet.
9. The striker shall stand inside of a space of four feet in diameter at equal distance between the first and fourth base; and the catcher shall not enter within those lines. The thrower shall stand at least thirty feet from the striker.
10. Players must take their knocks in order in which they are chosen; and after the first innings is played the turn will commence with the player succeeding the one who lost on the previous innings.
11. The ball being struck at three times and missed, and caught each time by a player on the opposite side, the striker shall be considered out. Or if the ball be ticked or knocked and caught on the opposite side, the striker shall be considered out. But if the ball is not caught after being struck at three times it shall be considered a knock, and the striker obliged to run.
12. If a player while running the bounds be hit with the ball thrown by one of the opposite side, before he has touched the home goal, while off a base, he shall be considered out.



13. A player shall not be considered on a base unless he is within a foot of it. And any player struck by the ball at more than that distance is out.

14. When playing “each one for himself,” or “one out – one out,” twice catch behind shall be considered out; three times knock to be allowed, and the same rules to be observed as in “one out all out,” with this exception, viz: the match shall consist of a certain number of innings on each side, as may be agreed upon by the choosers, and the side marking the highest number of tallies at the close of their respective innings shall be judged the winner.

15. A player having possession of the first base when the ball is struck by the succeeding player, must vacate the base, even at the risk of being put out; and when two players get on one base, either by accident or otherwise, the player who arrives last is entitled to the base.

16. The ball being caught on the first bound from the ground shall be considered fair, in all instances.

17. When no judges or referees are appointed, and a dispute arise, the two members choosing shall act as umpires in the matter; and in case they fail to settle the dispute they shall select one of the bystanders to whom the matter in question shall be referred – and his decision shall be final and binding upon all parties.

18. No member, engaged on either side, shall withdraw during the progress of the game, without first notifying the chooser of his intention.

19. These Rules shall not be altered or amended except by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at a regularly called meeting; but all, or any portion of them, may be suspended during any one game by a vote of the majority of members present at the time of choosing sides.

[A Manual of Cricket and Base Ball with Rules and Regulations; Mayhew & Baker, Boston, 1858. pp 20-24; Note: These appear to be the rules of the Olympic Club, adopted in 1857; see Protoball Chronology 1857.30.]

**12.** The Winthrop base ball club of Holliston, beat the Olympic club of Boston, in a game on Boston common on Monday, the former scoring 100 tallies to twenty-seven of the latter. The game lasted nearly four hours and was witnessed by thousands of spectators. [The Congregationalist (Boston), June 4, 1858]

**13.** The Holliston and Sharon base ball clubs, both of which have beaten the Boston club, played a game on Saturday to test the question of superiority. Holliston beat, making 100 runs to 69. [Lowell Daily Citizen and News, July 26, 1858]

14. The great source of amusement and excitement, here and in this vicinity, for the past season, has been ball playing, or the game of round, or base ball. This past summer, nearly every town has had its club, and has tried its strength with the club of some adjoining town. We Barre boys have had one chance, and have tried without success for many others. We don't know why it is, but it really seem to us as if they were a little afraid of us...Barre has for many years been famous for its ball players and we wish to prove that it has not degenerated.

[Barre (MA) Gazette, September 17, 1858]

15. In your paper dated the 17<sup>th</sup> Sept., I noted a communication with the above heading in which, complaint is made, "at the course pursued by the North Brookfield ball players, in declining to accept the proposition of the 'Barre boys,' to play a match game of ball, on the Wednesday previous; the game to be that usually played by the Barre boys, viz. – "one out-one out, flying ball," and lest other players should form incorrect ideas concerning it, I would like, through your columns, to make a few statements in regard to it. Last spring, the North Brookfield boys being desirous to play a match game of base ball with the Barre boys, sent them a challenge, containing two propositions. First, they would go to Barre and play it, if they could play the game usually played here, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, if the game could be played here, they would play the game usually played by the Barre boys. – That challenge was accepted upon the first proposition, and the Barre boys were defeated. Some time after that, the North Brookfield boys formed themselves into a "Base ball club," after the manner of other clubs in the State, and, according to the "rules" adopted by them, they can play no other game, than that of "one out-all out," the game played by all organized clubs.

On Monday, Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>, they received an invitation from the Hardwick boys, "to state any time during the next week," when they would come to that place, and play a match game with them; they fixed the time Saturday, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, which proved agreeable, and it was decided to play then. On Saturday, Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>, they received a letter from the Barre boys, stating that they proposed coming to this place, on the next Wednesday, (Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>) to return the visit they had last Spring, only, they wished to play the game "one out-one out," or, in other words they then accepted the other proposition contained in the challenge sent them last spring. A reply was sent back, stating that it would be impossible to play at that time, as the game with the Hardwick boys was to be played on Saturday, and one match game a week, was enough; and, furthermore, that it was very doubtful whether the boys would consent to play that game, ("one out one out,") at all, stating the reasons why; but would inform them further, after the game with Hardwick was disposed of.

On going to the latter place, they had reason to believe, that the object the Barre boys had in view, in wishing to play at that particular time, was to cause them to practice that game, until Wednesday, and so give them no chance to prepare for the contest with Hardwick; and, considering that to unfair, to say the least, they concluded, "to take no

further notice of the proposal at all.” They then voted, “never to play the game ‘one out one out.’” Had the Barre boys been honorable in their dealings toward the, it is more than probable the North Brookfield boys would have played the game, waiving their rules on that occasion, on account of their being victorious before. Thus the matter stands between the North Brookfield and Barre boys. Should the Barre boys wish to play the game, played all over the State, (with the exception of Barre, and a very few other towns in its vicinity,) viz. – “one out all out, flying ball,” I have no doubt they could be gratified.

[Barre (MA) Gazette, October 1, 1858]

**16.** The Bay State Ball Club of Boston have accepted a challenge from the Yankee Base Ball Club of Natick, and will play a match game on Boston Common this afternoon, the game to consist of 100 tallies, to be played by twelve members from each club.

[Boston Daily Advertiser, May 17, 1859]

**17.** The match games of Ball and Chess between Amherst and Williams Colleges, which had been talked about for some time, came off in the town last week – the Ball game on Friday and the Chess game on Saturday. The weather on Friday being delightful, a large number of ladies and gentlemen were gathered on the grounds, east of the Maplewood Institute, to witness the exciting affair. From Amherst there were present but few students except the players and chess champions, the authorities of the College not having granted a holiday to the students generally, but from Williams, where the Faculty were more liberal, nearly all the students were in attendance, and some of them were accompanied by ladies from Williamstown. The field when the friendly contest took place, reminded us of what was seen “a long time since” in Berkshire, when “General Training” was in vogue. The game commenced at about 11 A.M., and was not concluded until past 3 P.M.

The players were as follows: [Lists a captain, 12 players and an umpire for each side, plus an official scorer for Amherst.]

William R. Plunkett, Esq., President of the Pittsfield Club, was chosen arbiter or referee, and it is somewhat remarkable, that his services were required to decide every point, the Umpires not being able to agree upon any question proposed for their decision.

It is due to the students of Williams to say, that previous to the reception of the challenge from Amherst, there was no organized Ball club at that institution, while at Amherst there has long been a famous Club.

Amherst had the first innings, and 25 rounds were played and recorded. The results of each player and each club appear in the following table; the Amherst players winning a victory with a score twice that of their rivals: [Final score 73-33.]

At the close of the contest the Pittsfield Base Ball Club gave a dinner to the two College Clubs at the U.S. Hotel, Mr. Heaton having provided an excellent Dinner for the occasion. Toasts and speeches followed the repast, and all who participated had “a glorious time,” as we are assured.

[Sun (Pittsfield, MA), July 7, 1859]

**18.** About five weeks since, the students of Amherst College, thinking it a good idea to mingle the physical with the intellectual, sent an invitation to the members of Williams’ College for a match game of “round ball,” to be played at the time and place designated by the party to which the challenge was addressed; the invitation was accepted, and that the trial of muscle might be balanced by that of the mind, a game of chess was urged by the Williams boys, which proposal was reciprocated by the students of Amherst. The place chosen as the site of these games was Pittsfield, Mass.; the time to be the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. Accordingly all the necessary arrangements were made, and the games came off as appointed. The crowd present to witness the ball-game was very large, and the trial was acknowledged by all as one of the finest and most exciting ever witnessed in Western Massachusetts. The game was to consist of sixty-five tallies. After playing out even innings, the result was as follows: Amherst 73, Williams 32.

[Barre (MA) Gazette, July 8, 1859]

**19.** A well contested match game of bass ball came off in this village on Saturday afternoon – 50 tallies for the game. There were 12 on a side, under Capt. D.D. Cole and E.S. Wilkinson. H.N. Dean acted as umpire, and Wm. G. Farnsworth as game keeper. The game occupied 1 ½ hours, and was closely contested up to the 32d tally, when D.D. Cole’s side handsomely won the game. During the evening they organized into a regular Bass Ball Club, taking the name of “Young America.”

[Sun (Pittsfield, MA), July 21, 1859]

**20.** On Sept, 14<sup>th</sup>, the Hardwick Base Ball Club, received a challenge from the Naquag Club of Barre, to meet them on their ground, to play a match game of ball, on Wednesday, Sept 21<sup>st</sup>, at 9 o’clock A.M., for a purse of fifty dollars. In accordance with the challenge, the Hardwick boys were on the ground at the appointed time, but the Judges appointed to decide in the game, on account of the unfavorable state of the weather, were not present, so that both Clubs were obliged to appoint a new set of Judges, which necessarily delayed the time to nearly 11 o’clock, before the game commenced, which was then continued harmoniously up to the time agreed upon to dine at 1 o’clock P.M.

Hardwick scored in the mean time, 26 tallies to Barre 10. Immediately after dinner, both Clubs were promptly upon the ground again, but in consequence of a severe rain, they adjourned to the sitting room at this Massasoit House, as the Hardwick Club expected, to fix upon some future day to finish the game which had been commenced. Judge then of

our surprise, when there, for the first time, the President of the Naquag Club informed as that the prize could not be awarded to the victors unless the game was played out on that day. He assigned a reason that those who subscribed to raise the sum stipulated expressly that the game should be played on that day, and consequently the prize was forfeited...it is well known that there is not more than one chance in three, to play a game of one hundred tallies, on the day that it is commenced.  
[Barre Gazette (Barre, MA), September 26, 1859]

**21.** Yesterday morning at 10 o'clock, the Winthrop Base Ball Club of Holliston and the Unikon Club of Medway, began a match game at the South End Riding Park, for the championship of Massachusetts. Last year the Winthrop Club was beaten by the Union Club, and since then they have challenged the Union Club for another trial, in compliance with which this game is played.

The umpires are A.C. Daniels of Winthrop Club, A.S. Harding of Union Club and E. Walker of Milford Club. The Talley-men are William E. Parsons of Union Club, J.M. Hawkes of Winthrop Club and E.W. Cody of Olympic Club. The Union Club has the first innings.

At 6 o'clock the playing for the day closed...

The game is played according to the rules of the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players. The playing will be resumed at 9 o'clock this morning.

The morning playing closed at one o'clock, and the game was resumed again at two. The whole number of innings during the day were 66. In the evenings, the members of the two contesting clubs, with a few invited guests, partook of a banquet at the Quincey House...

[Boston Daily Advertiser, September 27, 1859]

## **22. The Championship in Base Ball.**

Yesterday morning at 10 o'clock, the Winthrop Base Ball Club of Holliston, and the Union Club of Medway, began a match game at the South End Riding Park, for the championship of Massachusetts. Last year the Winthrop Club was beaten by the Union Club, and since then they have challenged the Union Club for another trial, in compliance with which this game was played.

The umpires are, A.C. Daniels of Winthrop Club, A.S. Harding of Union Club and E. Walker of Milford Club. The Talley-men are William E. Parsons of Union Club, J.M. Hawkes of Winthrop Club and E.W. Cody of Olympic Club. The Union Club had the first innings.

At 6 o'clock the playing for the day closed. The runs were as follows: [lists twelve men per side for each club. The score was 70 to 37 in favor of the Union Club.]

The game is played according to the rules of the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players. The playing will be resumed at 9 o'clock this morning.

The morning playing closed at one o'clock, and the game resumed again at two. The whole number of innings during the day were 66. In the evening, the members of the two contesting clubs, with a few invited guests, partook of a banquet at the Quincy House...  
-Boston Daily Advertiser, September 27, 1859

[championship; three umpires and three scorers – one from each club plus one impartial; breaks during play; multiple days to complete match; innings; twelve men per side; social activities after match]

**23.** The match game between the Union Club of Melway and the Winthrop Club of Holliston, which was begun on Monday morning, was resumed yesterday morning at ten o'clock. Both clubs went to the ground in good spirits and eager to renew the contest. The Union Club was confident of success, and the Winthrop Club, although the odds were heavy against them, hoped to make an advance upon their opponents. The playing in the early part of the morning was very close, but towards noon the gain of the Union Club increased, which it continued to do until the 10<sup>th</sup> innings, when the Winthrop Club made a run of 12 tallies, the second-best made during the game. This run of good fortune inspired them, and they continued to play with much skill to the end of the game; but the Union was so far ahead of them that even the "run" could not save them from defeat, and at a quarter before three in the afternoon the game was won by the Union Club. The whole number of innings during the game was 101, 35 of which was made yesterday. The playing yesterday was more spirited than on the day before. But two accidents occurred during the game, and they were not allowed to interfere materially with its progress. On the 94<sup>th</sup> inning, while C.W. Seavy was waiting to strike the ball, thrown by W. Partridge of the Winthrop Club, struck him with full force upon the temple and nearly stunned him, so that for a while he was obliged to withdraw, but soon he appeared upon the ground brisk as ever. On the 98<sup>th</sup> inning, G.K. Hoffman on jumping at the stake to dodge the ball, struck one of his fingers against the stake, by which it was put out of joint.  
[Boston Daily Advertiser, September 28, 1859]

**24.** A match game of Base Ball was commenced on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> inst., between the Lightfoot Club of North Brookfield, and the Spencer Club of Spencer, at the latter place to be played according to the "Rules of the Mass. Ass'n of B.B. Players," for a supper. The playing commenced shortly after 9 A.M. and continued until 5 ½ P.M., when the Spencer Boys proposed to stop playing; the tallies standing 58 for the Lightfoot, to 38 for the Spencer, there having been 150 innings. After the playing ceased, they repaired to the Hotel, and partook of the supper, and at the suggestion of the Spencer boys, each man paid his own bill, as they did not acknowledge themselves beaten. The Lightfoot then

proposed to meet on the following Monday, and finish it, but the Spencer boys refused to meet them at that or any other time. It was evident to all, that, notwithstanding the very impartial decisions of that “Darling” referee of their selection, they were satisfied that they had not sufficient “science” to beat the Lightfoot yet. There were many things tolerated in the Spencer boys playing, which would not have been, had it not been such an easy matter for the Lightfoot to beat them. I write this, merely to let other players know how manly Spencer boys were on this occasion.  
[Barre Gazette (Barre, MA), September 30, 1859]

**25.** The idea of mere speed alone making a swiftly-pitched ball a difficult one to hit, by a good striker, is nonsense to us, as we know that in Massachusetts the balls are thrown very swiftly to the bat, and they are hot often enough by all.  
Brooklyn Eagle, August 6, 1860]

**26.** The grand match for \$1000 between the Union Base Ball Club of Medway and the Excelsior Club of Upton, is now in progress upon the Agricultural grounds in this city. The grounds were well filled this morning with ladies and gentlemen, although the lowering weather kept some away...At a little after 10 o'clock this forenoon, the Upton Club went in and began the game. The innings constantly changed for an hour, when Medway succeeded in making two tallies. Shortly after Upton made one, and so it went on until 12 ½ o'clock, when a recess was taken, the game standing: -

Upton – 5. Medway 4.

The stormy weather of this afternoon prevented a renewal of the game, and it can hardly be finished before Thursday.

The referees of this exciting game are C.F. Robbins of South Shore Club, of North Weymouth; C.H. Stoddard of Lightfoot Club of North Brookfield; and A.O. Dunham of Annawan Club of Mansfield. The tallymen are Wm. R. Parsons of Union Club, E.C. Aldrich of Excelsior, and J. Henry Simonds of Warren Club, Roxbury.  
[Boston Daily Advertiser, September 26, 1860]

**27.** ...the ball [used in the New York game] is two or three times heavier than in the Massachusetts game...In the Massachusetts game, any stoke of the ball is fair; the batter stands between the first and fourth bases; the ball is thrown and caught clear of the ground; a man is “put out” by being hit with the ball’ and any man out puts his side out.  
[p 940]  
[The Century, Volume 79; Scribner & Company; 1810; quoting an 1864 newspaper article]

**28.** A ruder form of Base-ball has been played in some Massachusetts towns for a century...

We may refer to some features of the old-fashioned game which possess interest. The first duty, in games with the bat, is "to choose up." The two best players, or any two selected, toss the bat from one to another; the tosser places his right hand above the hand of the catcher, who in turn follows with his own left, and so on. He who can get the last hold has first choice; but the hold must be proved by ability to whirl the bat three times round the head, and throw it. Another test of a sufficient grasp is for a player to hammer with a second bat on the hand which is uppermost. In this last case, therefore, the grasp must be low enough for the wood of the bat to be struck by the blow.

In this game there were three "bases" besides the "home" base, at about the same distance as at present; but the number of players was indeterminate. The pitcher threw the ball, and the catcher stood close behind the striker. When the batsman struck the ball, a run must be made; and the ball was not, as at present, thrown to the base, but at the runner, usually with all the force possible. If he was hit, he was out; and each member of the side had to be put out separately. There were, moreover, ways in which a side could recover its lost players. When all were out but one, who was on one of the bases, the pitcher and catcher, approaching to within some thirty feet, tossed the ball to and fro, and the runner must "steal" his next base, while the two former watched his movements, ready to throw to the nearest fielder of their side, who in turn would hurl the ball at the remaining player. If under these circumstances he could reach home untouched, he might "put in" any player of his side.

As there was never any umpire in these games, the field for controversy was unlimited. One way, as we recollect, of settling disputes was as follows: All proceeding to the spot of the doubtful catch, the best player on one side hurled the ball with all his force upwards; if it was caught by the designated player of the other party, the point was given in the latter's favor, and vice versa. [p 184-185]  
[Newell, William Wells; Games and Songs of American Children; Harper & Brothers; 1903.]

**29.** The game of ball for years a favorite sport with the youth of the country, and long before the present style of playing was in vogue, round ball was indulged in to a great extent all over the land. The first regularly organized Ball Club in this section was doubtless the Olympic Club, of Boston, which was formed in 1854, and for a year or more this club had the field entirely to themselves.

In 1855 the Elm Trees organized, existing but a short time, however. In 1856 a new club arose, the 'Green Mountains,' and some exciting games were played between this Club and the Olympics. Up to this point the game as played by these clubs was known as the Massachusetts game; but it was governed by no regular code or rules.



[Protoball Chronology entry 1854.3; George Wright's account of November 12, 1904, catalogued by the Mills Commission as Exhibit 36-19.]

**30.** Previous to the year 1854 the game of bat and ball was played in a "scrub" way, and there were too many differences of opinion on rules to allow the game to proceed smoothly; but in that year the Olympic Ball Club was organized by twelve young men of Boston. They elected officers and adopted a set of rules for playing the game. This club was the first in New England, and the rules were of much assistance in playing and prevented many disputes. Their first game was with the Elm Tree Club in 1855, but the new club soon disappeared. There were a number of young men, principally cartmen from the vicinity of Pearl street, who styled themselves the Green Mountain Boys, but we did not recognize them as an organization. They furnished much merriment to bystanders from their disregard of rules, which was inexcusable, to say the least. We remember of their playing with some clubs.

The word base was not used at that time, the infield being shown by bounds, or byes: it was probably introduced to designate the game from other games of ball and on account of the bounds being changed to a firmer base.

To draw crowds at the Worcester fair, it was the custom to offer a prize of \$500 to be competed for by two leading ball clubs, but these contests frequently ended in disputes.

The Olympic club was the most popular club in this section and was classed as the champion. They had games in the morning before breakfast, in the afternoon and on holidays and drew crowds of admirers. All went well until the year 1858, when on May 31 a country club having invited the Olympics to play a match game, came to Boston for that purpose. Every kind of preparation had been made to receive the visitors; the ground had been roped off, strong stakes four feet high had been placed in the ground for bounds, and new bats and balls provided; but there was a delay in commencing the game.

The visiting club had brought some things never seen before. The rules of the convention specified the size and weight of the ball and that it should be covered with leather, but the actual component parts of the ball inside the cover were not mentioned.

#### The Bullet-Ball.

It was understood that balls for this game were to be made of rubber and yarn, but in the absence of this particular mention the visitors produced a ball of minimum weight made of yarn wound as loosely as possible over a bullet to secure the proper size, and insisted on using it. The bats provided by the home club were of little use with such a ball, but the guests had been equal to all contingencies and brought flat sticks, not for striking the ball to the foreground, but to touch it merely and direct it from its course to the rear. Heavy gloves had to be used with such a ball, for bare hands could not hold it and it would twist more fingers and do more injury than the ball of the national game.

Gloves had not been seen in play before, neither were gloves used in the national game in old amateur times.

The immense company of spectators did not see the game that they were accustomed to, and many left the grounds disappointed, declaring it a fizzle. That the bullet ball was made for the occasion and for points was evident. Whenever this game was afterward mentioned in the presence of anyone who took part in it, there was a show of fingers as “relics” of that game.

After the game the Olympics entertained their guests and escorted them to the depot the next day, but that was the last of the bullet ball, it was never heard of again.

Mr. Gill and Mr. Arnold of the Tri-Mountain club were in the twelve who formed the Olympic club in 1854. Mr. Gill and Mr. Chandler of the Tri-Mountain and Mr. Forbush and Mr. Crosby of the Bowdoin club were in the bullet ball game. Mr. Chandler still survives...

[Boston Journal, February 27, 1905 (posted on Our Game website - <http://ourgame.mlblogs.com/2012/07/07/early-baseball-in-boston-part-2/>)]

**31.** In our youth, leather was not as cheap as now. Overshoes were made of pure, India rubber and the junk business was not as common as in these times and it was not difficult to procure an old rubber shoe for the foundation of a ball. Many a dear old grandma or auntie of today will remember having stockings and mittens being begged of them, which were knit at home by hand, to be unraveled for ball stock, and many old grandpas will remember parting with their boots that the legs might furnish covers for balls.

Small Ball Game.

The small ball game must be as broad as New England instead of being limited to Massachusetts, for the writer well remembers when on a visit to Maine in the '40s of being presented with two balls handsomely covered with leather on account of his love for the play. Good balls were also made partly of sponges[,] curled hair or cork.

In the scrub games tricks were often resorted to for advantage. One man would throw cross-eyed to bother a striker, and again, look on the side in which a man held his bat and throw to the other side, but some were smart enough to take advantage of this and swipe the ball tremendously to the rear. By indication of the catcher with eyes or finger, which the batsman could not see, a thrower would deliver a ball almost out of reach when looking at the catcher's feet or vice versa, and sometimes there were two catchers, one crouching and the other standing over him, and then the two catchers would stand on either side of a striker. These antics prevented the exercise for which the game was instituted and had no good effect.

The Massachusetts game, as it was called, and as the Olympics formulated it, with the exception of throwing the ball at a player, would be fully as interesting to play or to witness as the national game. There is little danger of injury, it is harmless, so to speak, and for amateurs it is the proper game. It requires more agility and alertness, and quicker decision than the present game and is less laborious. No armor is necessary, and less equipment is requisite. Left-hand throwing at times would come in good play and is sooner acquired than one thinks. It is the finest field exercise and pastime imaginable, and should be adopted by our young men and boys.

[Boston Journal, March 6, 1905 (found at Our Game website - <http://ourgame.mlblogs.com/2012/07/08/early-baseball-in-boston-part-3/>)]

**32.** Mr. Lawrence says, as a boy [h]e played Round Ball in 1829. So far as [his] argument goes for Round Ball being the father of Base Ball, it is all well enough, but there are two things that cannot be accounted for; the conception of the foul ball, and the abolishment of the rule that a player could be put out by being hit with a thrown ball.... Mr. Lawrence considers Round Ball and Four Old Cat one and the same game; the Old Cat game merely being what they would do when there were not more than a dozen players, all told.

[Letter from Henry Sargent to Mills Commission, June 25, 1905 (from *The Rise and Fall of New England-Style Ballplaying*; Larry Mcray; *Base Ball*, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2011)]

**33.** In a match game of round ball there were fourteen players on a side. The game was quite as active as baseball is and exciting. Bases were called goals. There were four goals set in a square, not in a diamond. At each goal a stout stake four feet high and about two inches in diameter was driven into the ground. The runner going at full speed would seize this stake, frequently swinging around it two or three times before he could stop himself. There was no running beyond first on a hit. Unless some part of the runner's body touched the goal he could be put out by being hit by a thrown ball. "Pitched out" we called it.

The batter stood in a circle four feet in diameter, midway between first goal and home. The thrower stood in the center of the square made by the goals, thirty feet from the batter. Many teams had what was called a "dip thrower" – that is, one who could throw a swift ball, starting low and shooting up. There were no fouls. Everything went. Backhanded batting was common. The batter swinging round with the ball as it came to him would drive it sideways or backward for a long hit. A few were skillful at what was called side batting. Grasping the bat near the middle with the thumb and fingers of one hand and being careful that the finger ends were below the surface, they held it horizontally, the end pointed toward the thrower. In this position the batter would catch the ball on the top of the bat and, in a fraction of a second, as it slid along the surface and by a quick deflection of the bat shoot the ball backward to the right or to the left.

Hundreds of men now living in central Massachusetts have seen it done. There were three catchers in line behind the batter. The first catcher played close. He usually

crouched and took only the low throws. The second and third catchers stood erect, alert for the high and wild throws. There were two back fielders, one at the right and one at the left of the third catcher. They were there for the backhand and side hits. There was a player at each goal, a player between second goal and home and two outfielders. The ball was made of woolen yarn, firmly wound, with a few shot in the center. It was covered with leather and was somewhat smaller than the regulation baseball. It was not mushy. A tick and a catch was out. To avoid being put out by a ball thrown at him and properly coached, a runner would now jump in the air, now fall flat on the ground and up and away again in a twinkling. Runs were called tallies. The big matches were generally decided by the priority in getting 100 tallies. Each team chose its own "referee," and the two "referees" chose a "judge," who was a solemn and important person, silent except when the referees could not agree. His decision was final.  
[Aberdeen Daily News (Aberdeen, SD), July 18, 1905]

**34.** That veteran and "father" of our national game, Mr. Henry Chadwick, in a treatise upon the subject, published in 1868, holds to the opinion that "rounders" was changed to "town ball," and that this later on was again changed into our old Massachusetts game, the change consisting mainly in the fact that the ball was increased in size and weight and thrown to the batter instead of being pitched or tossed...[p 127]

The first regularly organized club to play the Massachusetts game in New England was the "Olympics" of Boston in 1854. In 1855 the "Elm Trees" took root, and in 1857 the "Green Mountains" and "Hancocks" saw the light. [p 128-129]

The ball had a small buckshot in its centre and covered with buckskin or chamois leather.  
[p 129]

Instead of throwing to the baseman, to cut off a runner, as is now done, the ball was thrown directly at the runner himself: a moving object, however, is not so easy to hit and many misses were made as well as bull's-eyes. I remember once seeing Harry Forbush of the Olympics in a hard-fought game with a Holliston club, which was one of the best in the State, following up a base runner, but a little afraid to throw at him for fear of a miss, the man being ready to "duck at the flash," so he feinted and the man dropped like lightning upon his stomach, whereupon Harry, who was now nearly over him, grinned with triumph and let him have it as tight as he could throw. The fellow squirmed a little, but nothing could be said. The close rivalry between the clubs no doubt put a little unnecessary ginger into Forbush's arm; but that was the game. [p 129-130]

Four stout stakes driven into the ground, leaving about five feet out, were used as bases. In one of the Hancocks' games a runner was playing well off the first base and I, instead of throwing to Bradstreet, changed the direction a little and struck the unsuspecting runner full in the stomach. It did not hurt him much, but the surprise and dismay upon his face at thus suddenly finding himself put out caused much laughter. It was a risky shot, but the game was a close one and I took the chances. [p 130-131]

As there were no foul balls in this game, some of the players had a knack of shortening up their bat, - that is, grasping it near the middle, - and by a quick turn of the wrist striking the ball, as it passed them, in the same direction in which it was thrown, thus avoiding the fielders and giving the striker a good start on his bases. This mode of striking, however, led to lots of trouble for the catcher, who sometimes got a bad blow from the bat as it was swung back, and it moreover led to bad blood between rival teams, as there is no doubt that catchers were sometimes intentionally disabled in this way. [p 131]

A purse was usually played for by the senior clubs, which naturally encouraged any sharp practice of this kind. This mode of back striking was carried so far that bats not more than twelve or fifteen inches long and with a flat surface were used, and instead of making any attempt to strike with it, this bat was merely held at a sharp angle and the ball allowed to glance off it, over the catcher's head. [p 131-132]

The balls which my father taught me to make were of tightly wound yarn, with a bit of rubber at the core, quilted with good, tough twine, and would last a long time; and when needed new jackets could be put upon them. [p 133-134]

...bats could not be bought than as they are now...Clubs had them made to order, and boys had to do likewise or make them themselves. There were no shops carrying "athletic goods," and bats were not often enough called for to be carried in stock by anybody.

This being the case, my father again came to the rescue, as he always did, God bless him! and made me a little bat of black walnut. I can see it now; it had a round handle for about a foot and was then gradually widened out into two flat sides, being perhaps an inch and a half thick. [p 134]

Well, the little black walnut bat at last went the way of all bats, and broke; but by this time I had outgrown it and wanted one like the others in use, - that is, round and not square, - so I got a carpenter to make me one out of spruce, according to my directions... [p 136]

At this time a lot of the mechanics, firemen, etc., of the West End occasionally used to meet on the Common for a game among themselves, and would let me take a hand; but I could not strike a thrown ball with any great success and so they would toss them to "young Jimmy," as they called me...I enjoyed the fun and kept at it and a little later got in with some older boys who, though not a regularly organized club, used to congregate almost every day, choose sides, and take in any boy who might want to play, if the sides were not already filled. [p 136-137]

The mode of choosing sides was about as follows: one of the two captains would sharply toss a bat, held in a perpendicular position, to the other, who would catch it wherever he could. The one who tossed it would then place one of his hands above and touching that of the other, and so on, alternately, until the knob on the end was reached, when the last

one would endeavor, by digging his thumb and finger nails down inside the other's grip, to get such a hold upon it as would enable him to swing the bat three times around his head. Failing to do this, the other had his first choice of the players for his side, and then the choosing proceeded alternately and rapidly. [p 137-138]

[Lovett, James D'Wolf; *Old Boston Boys and the Games They Played*; Little, Brown & Company; 1908.]

**35.** Boys were not generally compelled to attend the Fast Day religious service. It had ceased to be as strictly kept as formerly. In villages and centers of towns there was customarily a match game of ball, very unlike the present base ball. Boys played [p 68] with boys and men with men. The New England bootmakers, of whom there were some in most villages, were the leaders in these games. [p 69]

[The men] arranged every week from early spring to late autumn a match game of ball either among themselves or the bootmakers of neighboring towns for Saturday afternoon, which was their half holiday. [p 170]

Our ingenuity was exercised in weaving watch chains in various patterns with silk twist; in making handsome bats for ball, and in making the balls themselves with the raveled yarn of old stockings, winding it over a bit of rubber, and in sewing on a cover of fine thin calf skin. This ball did not kill as it struck one, and, instead of being thrown to the man on the base, was more usually thrown at the man running between them. He who could make a good shot of that kind was much applauded, and he who was hit was laughed at and felt very sheepish. That was true sport, plenty of fun and excitement, yet not too serious and severe. The issue of the game was talked over for a week. I did my daily stint of stitching with only one thing in mind, to [p 174] play ball when through; for the boys played every afternoon. When there was to be an important match game the men practiced after the day's work was done.

[Albee, John; *Confessions of Boyhood*; R.G. Badger, 1910. Original reference found in Protoball Chronology entry 1840s.30, which noted that Albee was born in 1833 and grew up in Massachusetts.]