

Some Suggestions for Background Reading¹

Preliminary Note on Origins Lore: If you are relatively new to researching the origins of baseball and other games involving bats, balls, and base-running, do not accept every “origin story” you find as necessarily accurate or complete. For example, some sources suggest that prior to the mid-1800s, such games were played by primarily by juveniles (children under the age of 18), but current research provides evidence of play by adults, including college students and military personnel. Note also that some descriptions of early games were not created contemporaneously but rather were written many years after the fact and thus may not be completely accurate.

On the Early Evolution of Base Ball and Baseball-Like Games:

Protoball Web Site – <http://protoball.org/> - Current resources include:

[Glossary of Games](#) - A short description of 290 baseball-like games. The Glossary includes baseball's likely predecessor games and later games that derive from baseball.

[Bibliography](#) – A list of publications you can use to explore the origins of ball games and baseball in depth.

[Enhanced Search](#) - For complex full-text searches on much of the information on the site.

On the Early Evolution of Base Ball

Morris, Peter (2008), [But Didn't We Have Fun? An Informal History of Baseball's Pioneer Era 1843-1870](#) (Ivan R. Dee)

Peverelly, Charles (1866), [American Pastimes](#) (Self-Published) - his chapter on baseball (“The National Game”) is reproduced in Freyer, John & Rucker, Mark (2005), [Peverelly's National Game](#) (Arcadia Publishing)

Ryczek, William J. (2009), [Baseball's First Inning: A History of the National Pastime Through the Civil War](#) (McFarland and Co., Jefferson, NC)

Sullivan, Dean A. (editor) (1995), [Early Innings – A Documentary History of Baseball, 1825-1908](#) (University of Nebraska Press) Chapter 1 (The Emergence of a National Game, 1825-1860)

Thorn, John (2011), [Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game](#) (Simon and Schuster).

On Baseball's English Roots:

Block, David (2005), [Baseball before We Knew It: A Search for the Roots of the Game](#) (University of Nebraska Press)

Block, David (2019), [Pastime Lost: The Humble, Original, and Now Completely Forgotten Game of English Baseball](#) (University of Nebraska Press).

On Fast Day and Base Ball:

Hulbert, Joanne (2007), "[Fast Day: Boston's Original Opening Day.](#)" [Base Ball](#), Vol. 1, No. 1: pp. 73-77.

¹ This list is, of course, not comprehensive, and is intended only to suggest sources with which you might begin your research.

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On The Game of Wicket:

Thorn, John, "The Old-Time Game of Wicket," <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/the-old-time-game-of-wicket-c3c40f2e0b8e>

McCray, Lawrence, (2011), "1859 -- State Championship Wicket Game in Connecticut: A Hearty Hurrah for a Doomed Pastime," Base Ball, Vol. 5, No. 1: pp. 132 - 135.

On Massachusetts Rules Base Ball:

Soos, Troy (2006 edition) Chapter 1, "The Early Years: From Children's Game to Gentlemen's Pastime," [Before the Curse: The Glory Days of New England Baseball, 1858-1918](#) (McFarland, Jefferson NC), pp. 9-23.

Women and Baseball:

Kovach, John M. (2005), Women's Baseball (Arcadia Publishing) Chapter 1 (The Early Days 1866-1900)

Baseball and U.S. Popular Culture:

Rielly, Edward J. (2000), Baseball – An Encyclopedia of Popular Culture (University of Nebraska Press) (Set up as an encyclopedia with 269 topic entries, including some on history of baseball, such as "Fiction" pp. 96-98 and "Townball" p. 300, "Rounders" pp. 262-263, "Massachusetts Game" p. 300, and "College Baseball" pp. 61-63)

We invite users to suggest additions to this list.