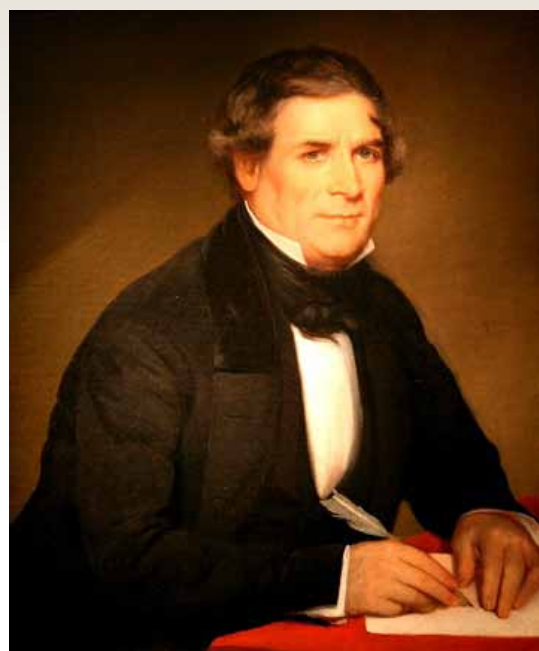




Thurlow Weed 1883  
autobiography

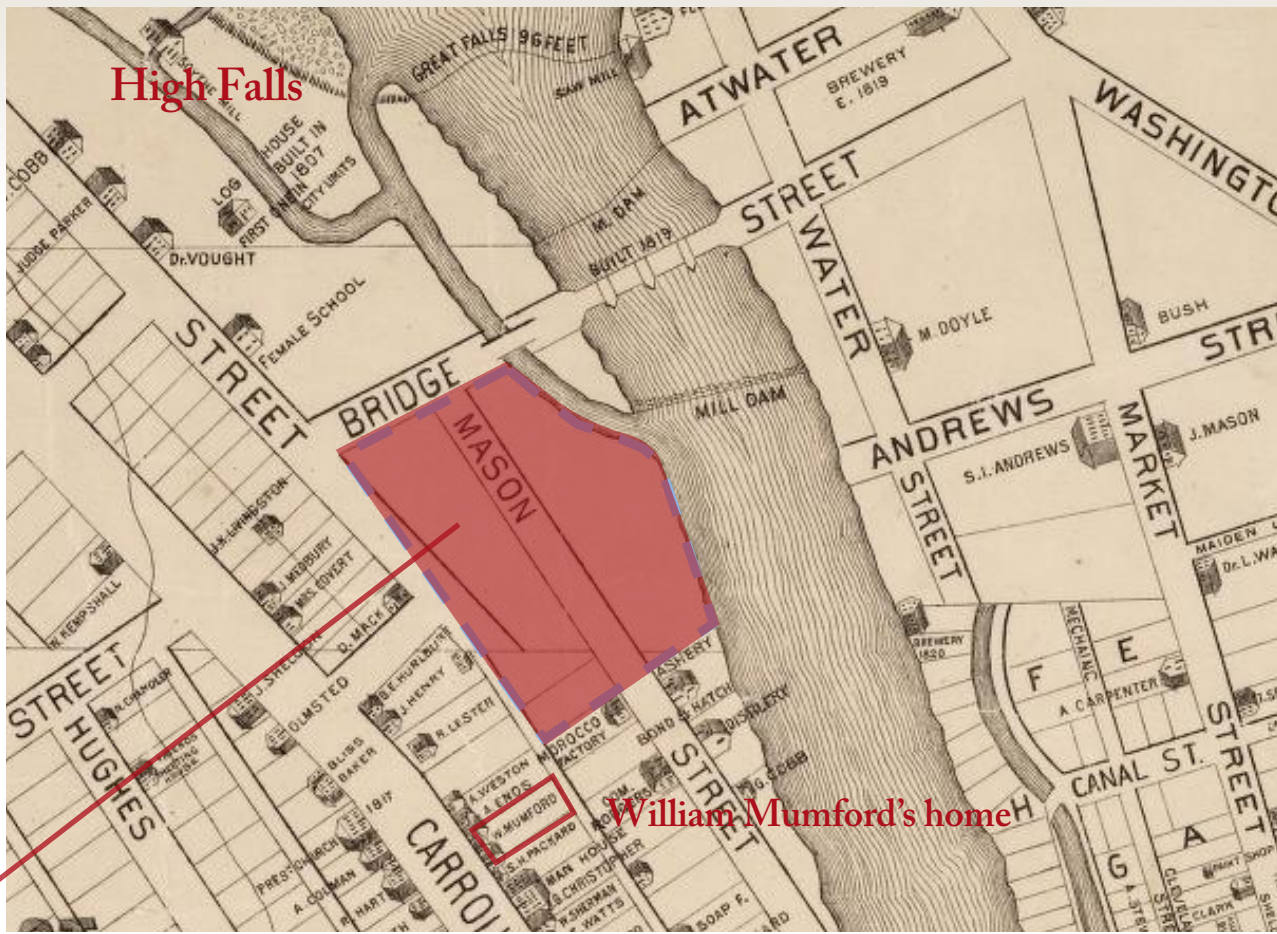
“The ball-ground...  
by the side of the river,  
above the falls...”

The 1883 autobiography of Thurlow Weed, a prominent early Rochester New York newspaper publisher, contains a passage referencing early base ball in Rochester. It refers to **“Mumford’s Meadow,”** a ball-ground on the bank of the Genesee River. Weed’s passage, referencing the summer of 1825, is 14 years prior to the mythical Abner Doubleday story.



Thurlow Weed

Probable location of  
Mumford’s Meadow  
(1820 map)



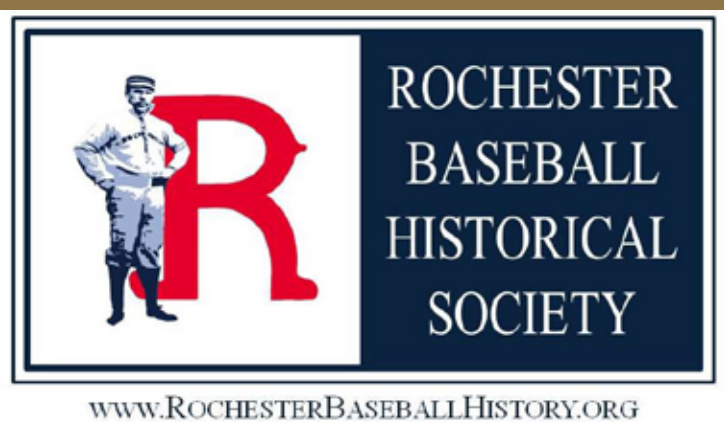
Probable location of  
Mumford’s Meadow  
(current satellite image)

The passage reads: “The ball-ground, containing some eight or ten acres, known as Mumford’s Meadow, by the side of the river, above the falls, is now a compact part of the city.” Mumford’s Meadow was likely on the west bank of the Genesee River, just south of High Falls.

1825

...Where it all began

THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL IN ROCHESTER, NY





# Organized Amateurism



James Backus

Organized amateur base ball became wildly popular in Rochester in 1858, with the Flour City, Live Oak, Olympic and Lone Star clubs among the first in the area, playing on vacant lots and city squares. The first organized match was played between the Flour City and University of Rochester ball clubs. The Live Oaks won the first city championship later that year, sparking a competitive spirit among their contemporaries.

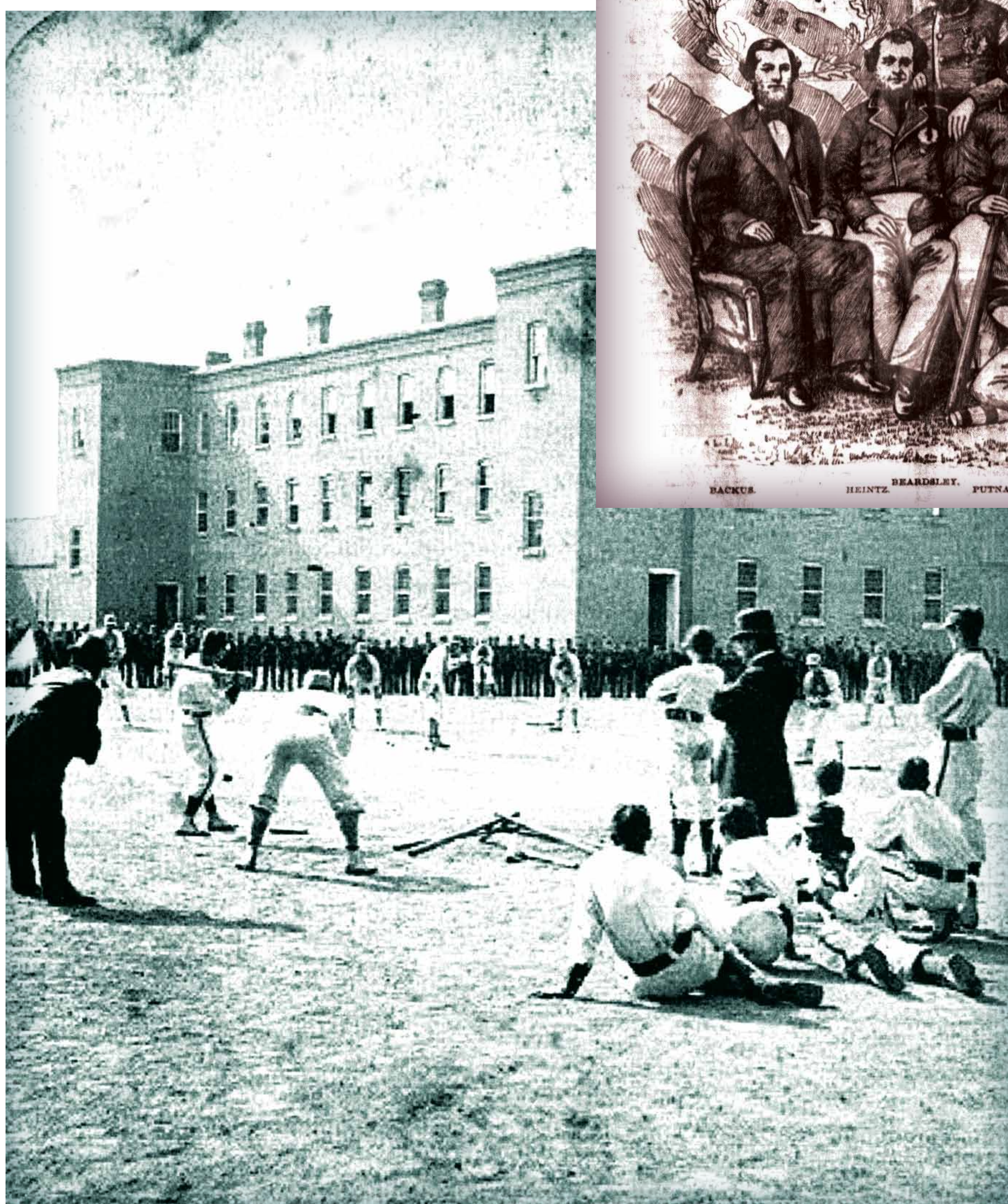
Early base ball had not yet been segregated. Men like Frank Stewart and Charles Douglass (son of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass) played with integrated clubs such as the Charter Oak. Segregation eventually permeated all parts of society, and base ball was not immune.

Many baseball milestones occurred in Rochester. Richard Willis of the Lone Stars and Ed Loder of the Live Oaks were among the first to do “irregular” or “curve” pitching, at least five years before Candy Cummings was credited with inventing the curve ball. The famous Excelsiors of Brooklyn defeated Flour City and the Live Oaks in Rochester during the first organized tour in U.S. history.

Although the game declined during the Civil War, soldiers kept base ball alive on the home front. Among local post-war clubs were the Pacifics, Atlantics, Excelsiors and Mutuels in 1865. With the advent of professionalism in Cincinnati in 1869, amateur base ball in Rochester began to transition to the professional game as well. Cincinnati’s celebrated tour that year included two games in Rochester.



The Live Oaks won the first city championship, 1858



Western House of Refuge (c. 1875)



Silver Ball trophy was awarded to the city champion

1858 – 1876

*Baseball milestones in the Flour City*

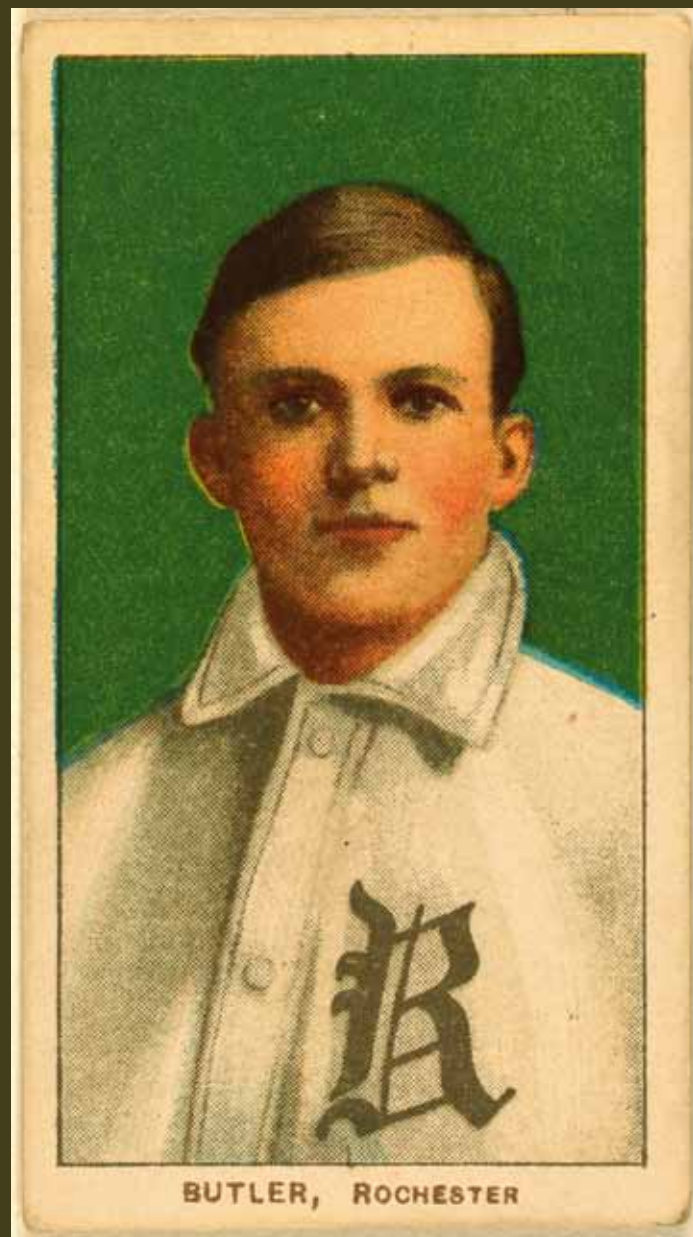
THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL IN ROCHESTER, NY



# Before They Were Wings



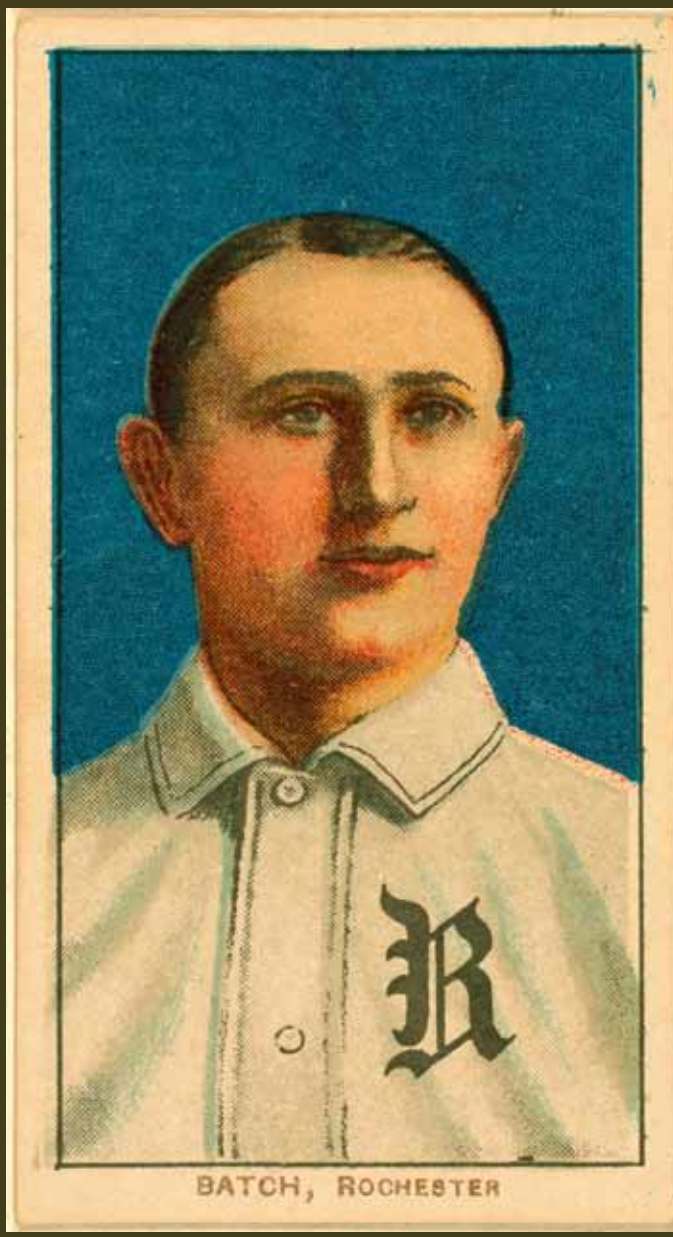
BARGER, ROCHESTER



BUTLER, ROCHESTER



CHAPPELLE, ROCHESTER



BATCH, ROCHESTER



GANZEL, ROCHESTER



MALONEY, ROCHESTER



Baseball Park on Bay Street, Opening Day 1909

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center



Fred Merkle



The "Rochesters"



Flag-raising at Baseball Park on Bay Street

## 1877 – Rochester's First Professional Team

The first professional team to represent the Flower City, the Rochester Base Ball Club, did not have a nickname so they were referred to as simply "The Rochesters." Home games were played at a newly constructed stadium between Union and Scio Streets.

**Unique Team Names** – Before they became known as the Red Wings in 1928, Rochester's ball clubs went by a variety of names, including:

**HOP BITTERS** An alcohol-based cure-all elixir. Team sponsored by the Hop Bitters Mfg. Co.

**JINGOES** A group of enthusiastic patriots eager to fight for their country.

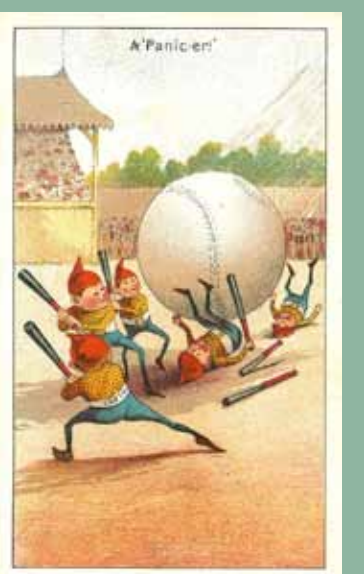
**BROWNIES** Good-natured little men on the order of mystical spirits. They often performed good deeds and enjoyed playing harmless pranks. The first Kodak Brownie camera was introduced in 1900 and also may have inspired the team's name.

Other names: FLOUR CITIES, BRONCOS, HUSTLERS, COLTS, TRIBE

**Sunday Baseball Blue Laws** – For much of the early professional era of Rochester baseball, the city's "Blue Laws" were enforced. This prohibited baseball from being played on Sundays in observance of the Sabbath. Sunday games did, however, continue to be played on diamonds outside city limits. The "Sabbath games" were played at places such as Windsor Beach in Irondequoit and the Ontario Beach Park ball grounds in Charlotte, which did not become part of the city until 1916.



Kodak founder George Eastman dressed in catcher's gear for pre-game ceremonies as part of Industrial Night at Baseball Park on Bay Street on June 23, 1917

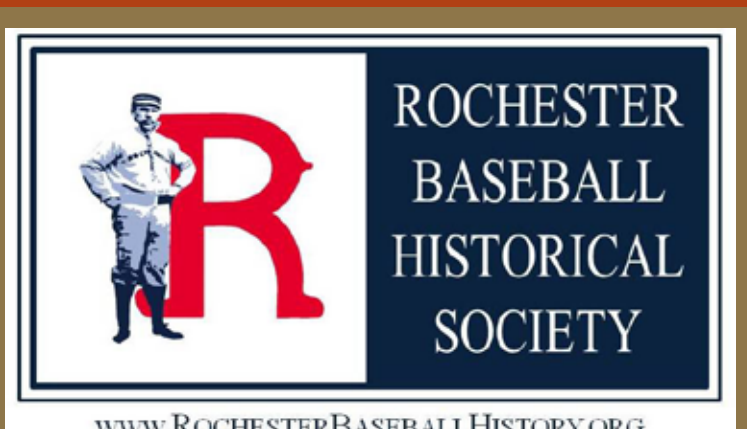


1880s card

1877-1927

*Rochester's early professional teams*

THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL IN ROCHESTER, NY



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