

# Baseball Origins Newsletter

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The baseball origins newsletter is put out by members of SABR’s Origins Committee, and the website for baseball’s origins, [www.protoball.org](http://www.protoball.org). It is intended to foster research and discussion of the origins of the game of baseball, baseball’s predecessor bat-ball games, and the growth of baseball prior to 1871 (when professional, league baseball was founded).

Comments, suggestions and articles should be submitted to Bruce Allardice, editor, at [bsa1861@att.net](mailto:bsa1861@att.net).

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# The New Dominion Club of Ottawa: The First Organized Ballclub in Canada's Capital

By Steve Rennie

Baseball arrived later in Ottawa than in other parts of Ontario. The city's geographic location—about an hour's drive north of the Canada–United States border today, but a longer journey in the middle of the nineteenth century—may have contributed to this delay. But that seems a stretch; The city is hardly in the hinterlands. Railways opened in the mid-1850s between Ottawa and Montreal to the east and south to Prescott, Ontario, which sits across the St. Lawrence River from Ogdensburg, New York. The Prescott and Montreal rail links are significant because of baseball's history in these parts of Canada. Thanks to the Centre for Canadian Baseball Research, we know of games as early as 1860 in Prescott.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, there is at least one account of soldiers playing baseball in August 1863 in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, which is about 150 miles east of Ottawa.<sup>2</sup> The game also made its way to Montreal as a soldiers' pastime by September 1865.<sup>3</sup>

But for whatever reason—or reasons—baseball took a few more years to establish itself in Ottawa. Perhaps the earliest recorded game in Ottawa's history was held at a picnic in the village of Metcalfe on September 13, 1865. This gathering included many different games, including "cricket and base ball."<sup>4</sup> The *Ottawa Daily Citizen* noted that the day ended with "a game of ball played by the ladies—alone." This might be a reference to baseball or another bat-and-ball game popular at the time, or it could describe some other activity altogether.

**BASE BALL MATCH.**

The expected match of base ball between the New Dominion Base Ball Club and the Ottawa Cricket Club came off yesterday afternoon on the ground in rear of the skating rink. The contest was a very spirited affair, and created a good deal of excitement between the lovers of the two games. Quite a number of spectators were present, who seemed to take a good deal of interest in the match.

Of course the cricketers were under a disadvantage in playing a game foreign to their favorite one, and as might be expected were beaten. On Thursday next a return match of cricket will be played between the base ball and cricket clubs.

The following is the score of the game played yesterday:

<i>Ottawa Cricket Club.</i>		O. R.	
Almond 1st b.....	3	2	
Baker s s.....	2	3	
Benjamin p.....	0	5	
Blackmore c f.....	1	4	
Hinsworth r f.....	0	4	
Langton 2nd b.....	2	2	1
Scott c.....	2	2	1
Shelton 2nd b.....	0	2	1
McMurtry 1 f.....	2	3	
Total.....	15	27	3

<i>Base Ball Club.</i>		O. B. L.	
Walsh 1 f.....	1	0	
McKinnon s.....	1	4	1
Wood 2nd b.....	2	4	
F. Cluff 2nd b.....	1	5	1
Lang r f.....	4	2	
McMerran c f.....	1	5	
Brown 1st b.....	2	4	
H. Cluff c.....	3	2	
Hodgson p.....	0	5	
Total.....	15	20	2

*Runs each Innings*—O.C.C.—1st, 5; 2nd, 0; 3rd, 10; 4th, 6; 5th, 6. Total 27.  
N.D.B.C.—1st, 2; 2nd, 4; 3rd, 6; 4th, 3; 5th, 1. Total 26.

**BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES.**

The Ottawa Times, July 31, 1868

The first baseball club in the city was established in 1867. Calling themselves the New Dominion Club of Ottawa, they likely drew inspiration for their name from the newly formed Dominion of Canada. A man named Mr. Routh is credited with starting the club.<sup>5</sup> This may be the team's left fielder, A. Routh (his first name is not provided, so it also could have been another member of the Routh family).<sup>6</sup> Relatively little is known about their first year of existence. Their president was a man named R.S. Wood, who also served as the team's short stop.<sup>7</sup> We know they played at least one organized game in 1867—a 141–20 loss in Ogdensburg in late August. The lopsided score suggests that baseball itself may have been new to the Ottawa players—a theory supported by an Ogdensburg newspaper's account of the game.

"In explanation it is proper to say that the Ottawa boys were not well posted on the rules of the game, and consequently missed making several tallies, and also got out several times when they should have avoided it," wrote the *Daily Journal*. "They have, however,

good material to make base ball players, and will do better next time. Their pitcher and catcher are as good as average, and all will do well when they understand the game better. They did not come boasting, but requested the privilege of coming to learn the game. Another year we shall expect to see them a match for the best.”<sup>8</sup>

By 1868, baseball was gaining popularity in Ottawa, with the New Dominion Club emerging as the city’s leading team. The club had over 60 members, making it the largest in the city.<sup>9</sup>

At least early on, there did not seem to be many other teams to challenge the New Dominion Club. The New Dominion Club planned to play a Victoria Day game against Metcalfe.<sup>10</sup> When that fell through, they ended up playing a game among themselves. The New Dominion first nine triumphed over the second nine with a resounding 94-25 victory. “The spectators were very numerous, including a large number of the fair sex, which gave the ground quite a lively appearance, and added to the spirits of the players,” reported the *Ottawa Times*. “Further interest was thrown into the game by two prizes being offered, namely, a beautifully finished bat for the highest scorer, and a regulation ball for the best general player.” Short stop R. Wood led the New Dominion first nine with 14 runs scored and won the bat, while his teammate Walsh caught six fly balls in left field and earned the prize ball.<sup>11</sup>

The New Dominion Club held regular monthly meetings in a room at the Ottawa Skating and Curling Club,<sup>12</sup> which opened a rink on Albert Street in 1867.<sup>13</sup> They played their games on a field right behind the rink—which today is in the heart of the city’s downtown core.

Not content with playing games against themselves, the New Dominion Club would soon face a tougher test. During the 1868 Dominion Day festivities in Ottawa, the New Dominion Club held its own against a visiting team from Ogdensburg. By the third inning, Ottawa had built an impressive 24-run lead over their opponents. But Ogdensburg somehow rallied to win the game by a score of 57–49.<sup>14</sup> It seems like there were no hard feelings, as the players dined together after the game, which was customary at the time. “The reception our boys met from Ottawa was princely and the supper provided most magnificent,” the *Ogdensburg Journal* wrote. “They all come home with the greatest admiration for the people of the Capital of the Dominion, and unable to find words to express their good feeling.”<sup>15</sup>

Back in Ottawa, the New Dominion Club dominated local baseball. A team of local mechanics fell to the New Dominion Club by a score of 109–15.<sup>16</sup> In late July, they defeated the Ottawa Cricket Club in a game of baseball by a much-closer score of 36–27. However, the tables turned in the return cricket match, with the New Dominion Club suffering a heavy loss of 173–54. “However well the New Dominion Club may play

baseball,” wrote the *Ottawa Times*, “they will have to practice cricket a while before playing matches.”<sup>17</sup> They ended up playing two more times that summer, although the newspapers offered no details about the final matches.<sup>18</sup>

Ottawa returned to Ogdensburg for a return match in late August. This time, they lost by a score of 53–19.<sup>19</sup> The team was disappointed to suffer such a loss to Ogdensburg after their narrow defeat earlier in the summer. But their spirits were no doubt lifted by the lavish post-game reception, where drinks flowed freely as toasts and songs filled the air well into the early hours of the morning.<sup>20</sup>

The next and final mention of Ottawa’s baseball team appears the following year in an *Ogdensburg Journal* article, previewing a July 4, 1869, game against the St. Lawrence Club in Ogdensburg.<sup>21</sup> After that, the club, for all intents and purposes, disappeared.

Two years later, the fate of the New Dominion Club was revealed in a letter to the editor of the *Ottawa Times*, written by a member of the newly formed Ottawa Base Ball Club.

“Sir: In your issue this morning your reporter incorrectly states that the Maple Leaf Club of Ogdensburg is a newly organized one, and not the old Maple City Club. As this statement would materially lessen the credit accorded us for having beaten them, I beg leave to give you the following facts,” he wrote.

“Four years ago we played against this same club under the name of the Ogdensburg Club, for the purpose of learning the rudiments of the game, and we were beaten by some one hundred and twenty runs. The Ogdensburg Club was then organized about six years. We played against them during the following season in Ottawa, and were again beaten, but by a majority of only eight runs. Unfortunately for our old New Dominion Base Ball Club we were unable to continue practice on account of the grounds on which we played being subdivided and sold, and our club became defunct. This season a new organization was formed, with four or five of the old players as members, under the name of the Ottawa Base Ball Club, and on the 30<sup>th</sup> June we played at Prescott against our old opponents from Ogdensburg, who had in the interval changed their club name to the more euphonious one of ‘The Maple City.’ The result of this match was that we were beaten by only one run. Our next meeting took place yesterday, when with a fair field and no favor, we had the extreme felicity of beating one of the best clubs in Northern New York.”<sup>22</sup>

Two members of the New Dominion Club who went on to play for the Ottawa Base Ball Club were catcher Harry Cluff and his brother, Tom.<sup>23</sup> Tom Cluff has been credited with introducing baseball to Ottawa, although there are holes in this story. He fought in the Civil War on the Union Side, enlisting as a private, according to both his obituary<sup>24</sup> and a booklet detailing the lives of Loyalists and their descendants buried at Ottawa’s Beechwood Cemetery.<sup>25</sup> Military pension records from July 1903 show a Thomas

Cluff—who used the alias George Stephens—served with the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, Company A, and filed for a US army pension from Canada.<sup>26</sup> Since there are no other records of his military service, it's not certain that this is actually the same Tom Cluff from Ottawa, or someone else with the same name.



Tom Cluff. From Bytown Fire Dept. website

We don't know much about Cluff's early years in Ohio. But we do know that he was back in Ottawa by the late 1860s, working as a blacksmith. He married Diantha Adelaide Clark in September 1869.<sup>27</sup> In the summer of 1870, Cluff was once again Ohio, where another brother, Edward (who also went by Ned), lived. The story goes that Tom Cluff watched three Cincinnati Red Stockings players put on a show for picnic-goers at a rural Ohio farm. The dazzling display apparently left Cluff spellbound. He sought them out afterward, eager to learn more and bring that knowledge back to Ottawa.<sup>28</sup>

The problem with this story is that we know Tom Cluff was already playing baseball in 1867 for the New Dominion Club—three years before he purportedly saw the Red Stockings' exhibition in Ohio. He may not have been baseball's pioneer in Ottawa, but he was undoubtedly one of its earliest players.

Both Tom and Harry Cluff were on the field when the Ottawa Base Ball Club played the fabled Boston Red Stockings in 1872 and 1873. Each of those games took place at the club's new grounds on a 10-acre plot of land at the foot of Elgin Street near the Rideau Canal.<sup>29</sup> Although Ottawa fell short both times, baseball had gained a foothold in the capital. The New Dominion Club may have been short-lived, and their contributions to Ottawa's baseball history are long forgotten, but they paved the way for teams like the Ottawa Base Ball Club and others that followed.

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- 1 "Base Ball in Canada," *New York Clipper*, August 25, 1860: 2.
  - 2 "Montreal Artillery Excursion," *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 20, 1863: 2.
  - 3 "Montreal Volunteer Cavalry," *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, September 11, 1865: 2.
  - 4 "Sons Of Temperance Pic-Nic," *Ottawa Daily Citizen*, September 21, 1865: 2.
  - 5 "The Dinner," *Ottawa Times*, July 3, 1868: 2.
  - 6 "Base Ball," *Daily Journal* (Ogdensburg, New York), September 2, 1867: 3. "A. Routh" is likely Alexander J. Routh (1844-97), a watchmaker.
  - 7 "The Dinner," *Ottawa Times*, July 3, 1868: 2.
  - 8 "Base Ball," *Daily Journal* (Ogdensburg, New York), August 31, 1867: 3.
  - 9 "Local News," *Ottawa Times*, August 7, 1868: 2.
  - 10 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, May 23, 1868: 3.
  - 11 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, May 27, 1868: 2.
  - 12 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, June 4, 1868: 2.
  - 13 "Club History," Ottawa Curling Club, Accessed October 21, 2024. <https://ottawacurlingclub.ca/index.php/about-the-club/28-club-info/151-club-history> The rink is about where Confederation Park is today.
  - 14 "Base Ball Match," *Ottawa Times*, July 3, 1868: 2.
  - 15 "Base Ball at Ottawa," *Ogdensburg Journal*, July 3, 1868: 3.
  - 16 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, August 5, 1868: 2.
  - 17 "Base Ball vs. Cricket," *Ottawa Times*, August 7, 1868: 2.
  - 18 Cricketers at Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, August 18, 1868: 2.
  - 19 "Base Ball Match," *Ogdensburg Journal*, August 22, 1868: 3.
  - 20 "Base Ball Club," *Ogdensburg Journal*, August 24, 1868: 3.
  - 21 "Local and Miscellaneous," *Ogdensburg Journal*, June 4, 1869: 3.
  - 22 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, July 28, 1871: 2.
  - 23 "Base Ball," *Ottawa Times*, August 5, 1868: 2.
  - 24 "Pioneer Of Bytown Is Fatally Injured," *Ottawa Citizen*, May 11, 1925: 16.
  - 25 "Descendants of Loyalists in Beechwood Cemetery: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Dominion Association."

26 "United States Civil War and Later Pension Index, 1861-1917," FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NHNF-TYZ> : March 24, 2016), Thomas Cluff, 1903.

27 Thomas Cluff and Diantha Clark. "Marriage Record," Ottawa, September 8, 1869.

28 David McDonald. "Aug. 27, 1872: The Day the Tide Turned in Ottawa," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 27, 2005.

29 "Manly Sports," *Ottawa Daily Citizen*, August 12, 1872: 1.

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## **New Bedford, Massachusetts Baseball Began in 1858**

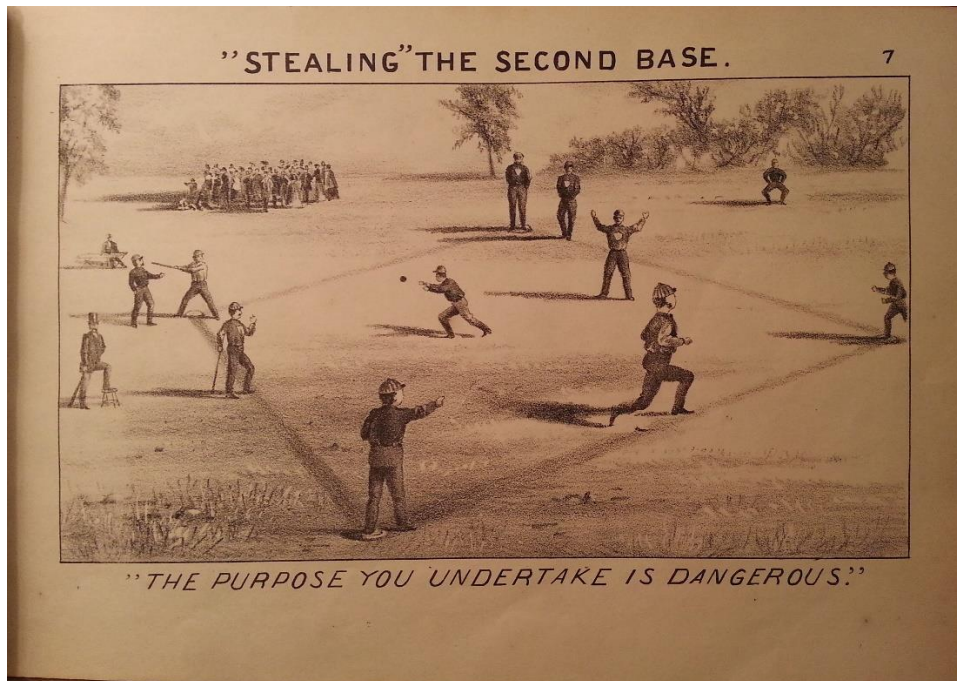
**By Kyle DeCicco-Carey**

The earliest mention of baseball I've located in the New Bedford newspapers is in the *New Bedford Evening Standard*. On August 11, 1858, the paper reported that a group of 25 had met on the evening of August 10 to form a baseball club. A president pro temp and secretary were chosen. A committee was appointed at the meeting that "reported" a constitution and bylaws which were adopted.

Ten days later, the club, calling itself the Ironsides Base Ball Club, now with 31 members, met for its first practice.

The club's members ranged in age from around 19 to 28 years old. Many appeared to have been employed as merchants and clerks and served during the Civil War. Among the members of the club was Savillion Van Campen, who some readers may recognize as the illustrator of the 1867 booklet, "Base Ball as Viewed by a Muffin."





Several other clubs were organized in September, including the Bay State Base Ball Club (which changed its name not long after formation to the Old Hickory Base Ball Club), the Bristol County Base Ball Club, and the Sons of the Ocean Base Ball Club. The *Evening Standard* mentions two other clubs in October 1858: the Union Base Ball Club and the High School Base Ball Club.

In a column praising the formation of ball clubs in the city (and the need for outdoor exercise), the *Republican Standard* commented, "We are glad to perceive the interest manifesting in this healthful, manly and invigorating game. It is one of the best outdoor sports with which Americans are familiar... Let there be a dozen more clubs in the city, baseball, cricket, no matter what, only that it be something nature teaches and reason approves... Air, sunshine, outdoor exercise and communion with nature are among the ablest moral teachers; the lessons they give us are ever eloquent, earnest and sincere."

It seems that New Bedford (and the rest of America) was familiar with baseball in 1858, including the two versions of the game that had been codified in New York and Dedham, Mass. That same column noted that the Ironsides' "manner of playing is the New York mode, and not the one usually adopted in Massachusetts." The Sons of the Ocean club also announced they were willing to play by either set of rules. These competing rules would prove problematic in New Bedford.



New Bedford Common, c. 1870. Baseball games were played in the foreground, near the trees. The Civil War monument in the photo was erected in 1866.

The first game reported on in the local papers was on October 16, 1858, on the New Bedford Common (now Clasky Common Park). The game was played by members of, rather than between, the Ironsides club and the Bristol County club. The members were split into sides of 12 each, and a “leader” was selected by each club. Obed Nye was selected for the Bristol County Club. Nye, age 26, worked for Allen & Bliss, a local home furnishing firm. In 1876, he would marry Lucy Allen, the father of his employer.

For the Ironsides, the 23-year-old, James D. Allen was selected as the leader. Allen worked for his father’s marble cutting business and would serve as a private with the 5th Massachusetts Battery during the Civil War.

Each side comprised a majority of players from their respective leader’s clubs.

The game, or as the *Daily Mercury* called it, “anti-dyspepsia exercise,” lasted an hour and a half, with Nye’s side winning, 100-84.

The accounts of the game listed the batting orders but did not provide details of the game. The *Evening Standard* stated that the game “was that known as the “Massachusetts,” which is the one usually played by the Bristol County Club, while the Ironsides play the one known as the “New York,” which differs from the Massachusetts game in several particulars.”

It also mentioned that the two clubs would “probably” play the New York game at their next meeting, scheduled for Friday, October 22.

The October 22 game was an inter-club match played by the Ironsides, with just a few members from the Bristol County club. The New York rules were followed, and the leaders of the two sides were Andrew Hayes, Jr. and James D. Allen, with Hayes' side winning, 33 to 29.

The day before the October 22 inter-club match, the Ironsides issued a challenge to the Bristol County Club in the *Evening Standard*, leading to a public exchange:

We, the undersigned, on behalf of the Ironsides Base Ball Club, do hereby challenge the Bristol County Base Ball Club to engage in a match game on Thanksgiving next. As the Clubs play different games, the following manner of playing has been adopted: -- The Presidents of the two Clubs shall, upon assembling on the ground, decide in some way which game shall be played first and, after that, the two games are to alternate with each other. The party winning the first three games shall be declared victorious.

FRED. A. HOMER,

OTIS N. PIERCE,

TIMOTHY G. GAMMONS, Directors

P.S. – Answer to be made within 5 days.

It seemed that the Ironsides were willing to be flexible and devised a method to play by both sets of rules. However, the Bristol County Club outright rejected playing by the New York rules:

We the undersigned, officers of the Bristol County Base Ball Club, take this method of replying to a Challenge from the Ironsides Base Ball Club, as set forth in your paper of yesterday. We would say that having, as a Club, chosen the Massachusetts game as the proper one to be played on Massachusetts soil, we deem it inconsistent in a Match Game to play any other than the one governed by the rules and regulations adopted by the duly organized association of Base Ball players, established in Dedham, May 13th, 1858. Fearing, however, that the public may draw a wrong inference from the reading of the Challenge as it appeared in your columns, and suppose that the arrangements were in truth perfected for a trial of skill, permit us to state that any manner of playing which has been adopted has met the approval of but one Club, and that the one which sent the Challenge, seeming to us rather unusual proceedings, considering we are the challenged party. In conclusion, we are prepared to accept any Challenge from the Ironsides Club

presented between now and Thanksgiving of 1858, to play a Match Game of Base Ball, in accordance with the fashion of the Old Bay State, each side to consist of fourteen players. The game, 100 Tallies, the making of which by either Club shall judge that Club the winner.

Per Order,

R.N. Doane President,

A.H. Doty, Vice President

Jas. H. Hathaway, Sec'y.

The Ironsides were more direct in their response, asking for a yes or no answer to their challenge:

We the undersigned Directors of the IRONSIDES Base Ball Club, having considered the elegant and patriotic appeal of the Bristol County Base Ball Club to the sympathies of the public and not being able to determine whether they accept or reject the Challenge sent to them, and not liking the roundabout manner of the reply, would respectfully ask them to give us a direct answer and not dodge the point at issue any longer.

O.N. Pierce,

Fred. A. Homer

Timothy G. Gammons

I couldn't locate a published response from the Bristol County Club. However, on the same page that the Ironsides' response appeared, the Union Base Ball Club challenged the Bristol County Club to a match game on November 25 - -Thanksgiving Day.

It wasn't until about two weeks before the Thanksgiving Day game, that the first game between two distinct clubs was reported by the local papers. The game took place on November 13. The Old Hickory Club challenged the High School Club, who won 100-73. Other than the names of the clubs and the score (which suggests the Massachusetts game was played), the newspaper accounts provided few details. No player names, number of innings, or location were noted. The game was watched by "a large number of spectators," and the clubs gave each other three cheers after the game.

The *Evening Standard* began the account of the game, "From time immemorial, Thanksgiving and Fast days have been set apart for ball playing, but yesterday witnessed the most exciting game that has ever been played in New Bedford."

This account was the most detailed I found in the 1858 newspapers. The box score consisted of a list of each club's lineup and the number of runs scored. It noted that the bases of the Bristol County Club were used for the game. Each club chose 14 players, one umpire, and one scorer from their respective clubs. The umpires and scorers then chose a third person. Interestingly, members of the Ironsides Club were chosen as the third umpire and third scorer.

The weather was cool and clear with "a high wind [that] rendered the playing more difficult than it would otherwise have been."

At 10:00 AM, with around 1,000 spectators watching the game on the city Common, the Bristol County Club batted first, looking sharp in their new uniforms of blue shirts and black pants. The account noted "they seemed to be excited, especially their catcher," but did not elaborate or name the catcher.

The Union Club's battery, the "Remington brothers, who acted as thrower and catcher, have seldom been surpassed." The Union team wore white shirts and pants of the individual players' choosing.

Fortunately for the Union Club, style didn't matter as they won the game 103-18 in a 33-inning game that lasted two hours and fifteen minutes.

Afterwards, "a splendid ball" was presented by umpire William Cook of the Bristol County club to the Union Club. The newspaper account concluded:

In the afternoon, there were several "scrub" games, which were games where the various Clubs united and played together. The regular Ball season is considered to end with Thanksgiving, though many games will doubtless be played through the winter when the weather permits.

The Ironsides gave up their attempt to play by the New York rules. Two days before the Thanksgiving match, the Ironsides held a special meeting and voted "to be governed by the Massachusetts rules of play." The *Republican Standard* noted that with the Ironsides conforming to the Massachusetts rules, "all the Clubs in the city" conform.

The Sons of the Ocean Base Ball Club who had stated they would play by both sets of rules, either decided not to play by the New York rules, disbanded, or did not stay in port long enough to play. There were no other reports in the papers about this club after the initial announcement of their formation.

Baseball clubs continued to play in New Bedford through at least 1860. It wasn't until after the Civil War that the New York game made permanent return to the city with the formation of the Wamsutta Club in 1866.

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# **“Play (Foot) Ball!”**

## **How Did Early “Foot Ball” Compare with Early “Base Ball?”**

**By Bruce Allardice**

It being winter now, sports-minded people’s thoughts turn to football, the sport which, it is generally agreed, has supplanted baseball as America’s “National Pastime.”

But a game (different games, really) labeled “foot ball” was played in the United States around the time “base ball” took off. Pre-1871 newspapers are full of mentions of people playing “foot ball,” and “foot ball clubs” being established. This article will try and make clear that pre-Civil War “foot ball” bore only a passing resemblance to modern American football, and then compare the popularity of this “foot ball” to the burgeoning spread of “base ball.”

As to “foot ball,” the most usual form of the game prior to 1870 (at least, in newspaper reports) was an early form of the game we’d now call Rugby. This “rugby” game (in those days more usually labeled “foot ball” under the rugby school’s rules) derived from a game played for hundreds of years, which today Americans call “soccer” but in Great Britain and elsewhere retained its traditional name of “foot ball.”<sup>1</sup> To simplify greatly, soccer football came by its name logically—players were only allowed to advance the ball by kicking it with their foot. In 1845 students at the school in Rugby, Warwickshire, England, added a new component to soccer football, that of the player carrying the ball. Both games had as its goal advancing the ball over some line, and as formally practiced, had an agreed upon field of play with boundaries marked out. These students wrote out the rules. Other schools wrote out their own rules until, in 1871, the Rugby Football Union was founded to make uniform, and codify, the rules of the game.<sup>2</sup>

American newspapers often kept track of, and reported on, games of “foot ball” played in England, and how the English football morphed into rugby-style football. Since many colonists came from England, or visited there, Americans were perfectly aware of the game. As early as 1657 the city of Boston banned the play of “foot ball” in the city streets—on penalty of the hefty fine of 20 shillings. Cities such as Norwich and Hartford, Connecticut, Montreal, Canada; Washington D.C.; Salem and Nantucket, Massachusetts; Utica and Poughkeepsie, New York; later followed Boston’s lead,

showing that “foot ball” (in some form), like “base ball,” was played enough to be considered a public nuisance.

In December 1856 the *New York Clipper*, the bible for American sports, explained to its readers what rugby football was. The publication in 1857 of the immensely popular novel, *Tom Brown’s School-Days*, with its description of the students playing rugby football, aided greatly on reviving interest in “foot ball” in the U.S.—or at least in the rugby version of the game. In 1864 the *New York Evening Post* commented on how the rugby game shouldn’t be called “foot ball” at all, but rather “hand, or perhaps, race-ball.” For the *Post*, devotees of the traditional game would be “puzzled”, if not horrified or disgusted, by players picking up, carrying, or throwing the ball.<sup>3</sup> In 1866 Beadle, the well-known publisher of baseball guides, published its (*Dime*) *Book of Cricket and Foot Ball*, edited by baseball pioneer Henry Chadwick, which explained the latest rules of soccer football to Americans. In 1871 Peck & Snyder published its own football guide, which gave the rules of both the rugby and soccer football games.

As in baseball, the play of “foot ball” preceded the formation of organized clubs. Future President John Tyler is said to have played “foot ball” in 1806, while a student at William & Mary College. We read of “foot ball” played at Harvard University in 1800, Yale University in 1806, Dartmouth University in 1815, Augusta Georgia in 1823, Brown University in 1827, Lexington Kentucky in 1832, Philadelphia circa 1845, Cincinnati in 1849, New Jersey in 1857, Brooklyn in 1851, Georgetown University in 1858, St. Louis and Hartford in 1858, Baltimore and Dayton in 1859. Even far-off Marysville, California and Los Angeles had the game in 1860. While it is usually unclear which “foot ball” variant is being played, the earlier games were probably soccer-like. For example, the 1858 Hartford vs. Trinity College game forbade carrying of the ball.<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia recognizes a game played in Wisconsin in 1866 as the first game played in the U.S. under the 1863 English soccer association rules.<sup>5</sup>

At approximately the same time that men in eastern seaboard cities such as New York, Boston and Philadelphia started base ball clubs, the same social class also formed foot ball clubs—not as many as baseball, nor as widespread, but formed nonetheless. The most famous “foot ball” games before the Civil War (certainly the ones most widely reported) were those played in the 1850s by the students of Harvard University, generally the freshman and sophomore classes against the juniors and seniors.<sup>6</sup>



Heyward, *College Scenes* (1850)

HARPER'S WEEKLY.

AUGUST 1, 1857.



from *Harper's Weekly*, Aug. 1, 1857.

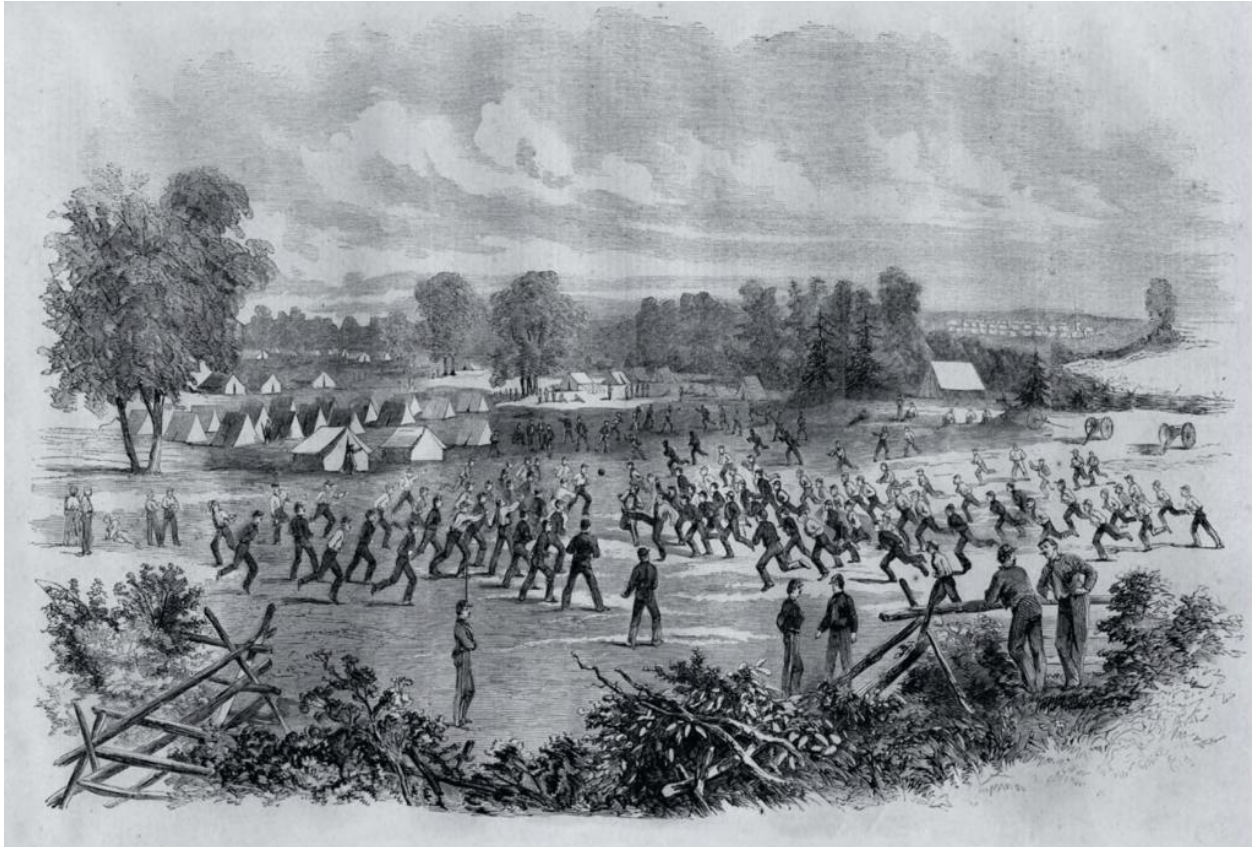
The Oneida Foot Ball Club (FBC) of Boston, formed 1862 under a variant of rugby rules sometimes called the “Boston” rules, claims to be the oldest football club in the United States. Clubs were started earlier in other cities as well. Philadelphia had its Kensington Foot Ball Club in the fall of 1856. The Hudson Foot Ball Club formed in Brooklyn in 1859, as did a club in New Orleans. A St. George’s Foot Ball Club (probably associated with the St. George’s Cricket Club of New York) played on Thanksgiving Day, 1852, and allegedly, as early as 1843. We are not sure which set of football rules these clubs played under.<sup>7</sup> However, the foot ball club formed at Princeton University in 1857 played a variant called “ball down” which allowed players to hit the ball with their fist in order to propel the ball forward.

But clearly “foot ball” was nowhere near as popular as “base ball.” A search of online U.S. newspapers 1850-70 shows 68,600 mentions of “base ball,” compared to 3,929 mentions of “foot ball”—a 17-1 ratio. The search for “foot ball club” versus “base ball club” yields an even greater disparity: 18,967 mentions of baseball clubs versus 22 mentions of football clubs. The *New York Clipper*, which held itself out as reporting on



all American sports, mentioned “football” only 52 times from 1850 to 1864—or about three times per year.

The Civil War put a damper on all organized sports, notably “base ball,” but also “foot ball.” Yet the records show that footballs were sent to Union troops in the field, as well as Confederate POWs, and that when in camp, the troops played “foot ball” just like they did “base ball.”<sup>8</sup> Two great woodcuts from *Harper’s Weekly* depict Union troops playing football in camp:





*Harper's Weekly*, Aug. 31, 1861, July 15, 1865.

From the Winslow Homer illustration, this latter game looks more like a brawl than a game, and may be a depiction of “mob foot ball.”

The soldiers often wrote home of playing BOTH “base ball” and “foot ball” in camp. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Maine, “Base-ball and foot-ball were favorite amusements among the soldiers.” On Thanksgiving Day, 1862, the 12th Vermont Infantry, in camp near Munson's Hill, Fairfax County, Virginia, played at “foot ball,” wrestling and other amusements. There was team play, then one-on-one play, the Colonel vs. the Drum Major, then the Lieutenant Colonel vs. the Chaplain. From the one-on-one mention, it suggests the game played was a form of soccer, rather than rugby-type football. The next year, a soldier of the 13<sup>th</sup> Vermont wrote home claiming “The boys of late have been indulging in games of ball--base and foot ball having occupied their spare moments.”<sup>9</sup>

The Montreal Foot Ball Club made the baseball-football connection explicit. In 1865 this club changed its name, and presumably its game, to the Montreal Foot and Base Ball Club.

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<sup>1</sup> Other less-reported-on games labeled “foot ball” were “Indian” foot-ball (early lacrosse) and a scrum game (sometimes called “Shrovetide Football” or “Mob

Football”), often between two rival villages, where the goal was to advance the ball across some line, and in practice, to inflict as many shin injuries as possible on your opponents. These games won’t be touched on in this article.

2 See <https://www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/laws.htm> for more on early Rugby. For more on early American soccer football, see Melvin Smith, *Evolvements of Early American Foot Ball*, and Brian D. Bunk, *From Football to Soccer* (U. of Illinois, 2021). Smith labels this rugby-like game the “American Carrying Game.”

3 *New York Clipper*, Dec. 20, 1856; *New York Evening Post*, Feb. 9, 1864.

4 See Melvin Smith, “1858: A Pivotal Year in Early American Foot-Ball,” at <https://www.ussoccerhistory.org/1858-a-pivotal-year-in-early-american-foot-ball/#:~:text=The%20year%201858%20is%20a,the%20carrying%20game%20becomes%20rugby.>

5 Under the 1863 London Association rules. See

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_soccer\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States#:~:text=Soccer%20in%20the%20United%20States%20has%20a%20varied%20history.,were%20played%20in%20that%20city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_soccer_in_the_United_States#:~:text=Soccer%20in%20the%20United%20States%20has%20a%20varied%20history.,were%20played%20in%20that%20city). It should be noted that the details of this 1866 game are disputed.

6 See the illustration in *Harper’s Weekly*, Aug. 1, 1857. See also Nathan Hayward, *College Scenes* (1850).

7 *New York Clipper*, Jan. 3, 1857, Dec. 10, 1859; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Oct. 1, 1859; *New York Sunday Dispatch*, Nov. 21, 1852; *New York Clipper*, Oct. 14, 1854. For Oneida, see Winthrop S. Scudder, *An Historical Sketch of the Oneida Football Club of Boston: 1862-1865* (1926).

8 *New York Clipper*, Nov. 16, 1861; *New York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1861; *New York Herald*, Oct. 29, 1861.

9 Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Regiment Maine Volunteers*; *Burlington Times*, Dec. 16, 1862; *Montpelier Green Mountain Freeman*, April 20, 1863. See the Protoball website at <https://protoball.org/index.php?search=%22foot+ball%22&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go> for more “foot ball” listings.

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## **In The Year of Baseball Fever (1867): Baseball Clubs**

**By Bob Tholkes**

A modest preface: Baseball’s popularity in America in 1867 would not today be described as a ‘mania’ or ‘fever’. At the time it was, sometimes with negative connotations, because never had a juvenile field game been so widely played by adult males, generally defined at the time as anyone over 16 and thus expected to be gainfully employed, and past such childish pursuits.

One central aspect of the 'fever' was that aspiring baseballists nationwide organized themselves, as they had in the east since the pioneering Knickerbockers of New York City into formally organized clubs. Earlier bat-and-ball matches between adults had been played by *ad hoc* groups on holidays and special occasions. Formally organized clubs were a significant departure.

### **Clubs for (Almost) Everyone**

Nothing reflects baseball's status as a 'mania' in 1867 better than the expanding diversity of its clubs.



Library of Congress. From "A Comprehensive View of Base Ball" (1859), W.T. Crane

In the military, baseball continued after its introduction during the Civil War, notably in the occupied former Confederate states, where in many places the occupying soldiers were introducing the National Association rules. A club was also founded at the U. S. Naval Academy, with the result that the first games played on the soil of some countries were between American shipboard teams.

Junior clubs helped fuel the 'fever' of 1867. An exasperated newspaper editor claimed that, having published the names of numerous new clubs and their officers in order to encourage the sport, "a large majority of these clubs were formed by lads scarcely in their teens, whose principal object was to get their names in the paper", and that "there is nothing left but to wait until the infants now in arms shall get into breeches and start more clubs."<sup>1</sup> The definition of 'junior' varied: The Resolute Club of Allegheny City, PA, a junior club, had members averaging 17 years of age; some were fully grown, over

5'8". 'Junior' in some circumstances simply referred to clubs that had not joined the National Association.

Every bureau of the federal government was reported to have a club. Federal employees among the prominent National Base Ball Club of D. C., for example, were concentrated in the Treasury Department. Such players in some cases were employed to strengthen the department ball team and had light or nonexistent duties. Hall of Famer George Wright was so employed, at a Pennsylvania Avenue address that apparently didn't exist.

Bowdoin College in Maine made baseball news by NOT allowing a club to be formed, for which 'old fogyism' was blamed. School clubs' schedules were affected by exams and the academic calendar. Clubs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina had to surrender state championships in 1867 because they could not defend their titles against challengers as promptly as required.

"Heavy" clubs based on players' weight proliferated, and indicate the importance of physical conditioning for serious ballists. Such clubs were most commonly formed more for laughs than to achieve skill. The public, apparently, immensely enjoyed 'fat' humor. The following typical notice appeared for a coming matchup of two heavy clubs, under the headline,

"THE CHAMPIONS vs. WOULD BE'S – *The greatest game of this or any other season.*- On Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> inst., these crushing nines meet to smash each other on the ball field. They will be gaily dressed and...will make a very handsome show...supported by heavy fielders, and a half dozen extra physicians to prevent accidents...it will be one of the most laughable (games) of the season. All the players weigh not less than 180 apiece, and, in one or two instances, take from five to ten minutes to reach the first base. Very funny." <sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, a club of 'old fellows' formed in Xenia, OH, announced that, in contrast to older men playing for laughs, they would observe "due decorum". The local paper hailed its formation as another sign that baseball was indeed a national game "when it reaches down to the depths of age, plucking its subjects from the despotism of stiff joints and rheumatism."<sup>3</sup>

Clubs were formed for beginners only, and, at the other end of the local skills spectrum, for local 'all-stars' to contend for intercity success.

German and Jewish ethnic communities and military veterans formed clubs among their members. Black clubs were reported in several states. Among women, the largest population marginalized by baseball, a schoolgirl club was photographed at Vassar College. One reporter in Pennsylvania claimed to have observed a game among

women who had journeyed for the purpose to a neighboring community, evidently for concealment.

A club of mostly businessmen formed in Woodstock, IL with the purpose of playing occasionally for pastime and notified the other clubs in town that it would not play interclub matches.

Trades and businesses had formed clubs since before the Civil War. Wealthier clubs sponsored junior clubs to provide future nines. Clubs were started at deaf & dumb schools and insane asylums.

### **Governance**

Henry Chadwick's *Beadle's Dime Base-Ball Player*, published annually and sold nationwide, had printed sample club constitutions since 1860, and they were still widely used to provide the basis for establishing club governance. The 1867 constitution consisted of seven articles prescribing the mission of the club, membership, the election and duties of officers, fees and dues, meetings, and amendments. The sample constitution was supplemented with by-laws governing practices, player conduct, and meeting. Within this framework, clubs adapted as best met their circumstances. More by-laws were often added, producing a variety of procedures regarding meetings, officers, goals and operations, enrollment and membership, committees, playing rules, the selection of the first nine (only nine usually played in a match game), betting, and donations. A practice first noticed before the war—incorporation—continued. The bill introduced in the New Jersey State Legislature to approve incorporation of the Eureka Base Ball Club of Newark listed 15 members as 'corporators' and stated as its objects, "the improvement and perfection of physical exercise, engaging in proper and lawful games of active exercise and amusement, and promoting social intercourse among its members." The bill would allow the club to own up to 25 acres of land, to host "base ball, cricket, and skating matches, or exhibitions of feats of strength, and all games requiring skills and science." The club sought to be allowed to issue capital stock of up to \$50,000.00 at \$10 per share, and to be allowed to hire "special police officers" to maintain order during its events.<sup>4</sup>

### **Activities**

The activities of baseball clubs went beyond the basics prescribed in club constitutions and bylaws.

Clubs grew increasingly imaginative in choosing names. Some were the inventions of the clubs of inexperienced baseball 'muffins' formed for putting on public entertainments. Thus the 'Sozodonts' (a brand of toothpaste) played the 'Night Blooming Cereus' (a flower blooming rarely, and only at night); and the 'Last Rose of

Summer' Base Ball Club played the 'Last Run of Shad.' Others reached into interestingly-named features of their localities, such as the tongue-twisting Pennesseewassee, of Norway, ME.

Clubs met in any office space a member or sponsor could make available, and, in at least one case, a saloon. Clubs with sufficient resources maintained a club room. The Wabash Club of Lafayette, IN, the first founded there and with nearly a hundred active members, was one such. Its rooms, located downtown in a commercial block on the public square, included a gymnasium boasting "stationary and swing bars, suspended rings, dumb-bells...and implements for boxing, fencing, and broad-sword exercise." Adjoining the gym, to improve the inner man, was a reading room with a library, decorated with pictures and paintings.<sup>5</sup>

Clubs often engaged in off-season activities, such as holding dances, variously called balls or hops, perhaps depending on the type of music provided. These when necessary also provided fundraisers. Charity balls were also held, sometimes in the format of a 'calico ball', where usually silk-clad lady ballgoers wore dresses of cheaper calico, which were then donated to the poor. Clubs found other ways to keep their members engaged in the off-season, depending on interests and resources: a reading society; a billiard hall; forming a chorus to entertain at civic events; and opening a social club or a gym.

Benefit matches, serving as club fundraisers and off-the-field charitable activities occurred throughout the calendar year, in hopes of raising the clubs' profiles in their communities and attracting members and sponsors. One club sponsored a lecturer, a popular public entertainment in this era. The most widely-reported of visibility-building activities occurred after the season, also, coincidentally, in Lafayette, when the local ball club challenged the local YMCA to a wood-sawing contest, the idea being to saw firewood for the poor, aged, and disabled against the coming winter. Keen to show that they were more than time-wasting game players, the contestants paraded, wielding their saws and bucks and accompanied by a brass band, to the site, where several cords of wood had been piled, and sawed away as the band played. The nationally distributed *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* picked up the story and printed an image of the scene. Thirty-six cords were chopped, and the ballplayers won the contest.<sup>6</sup>



WOOD SAWING CONTEST BETWEEN THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION, AND HOOSIER BASE BALL CLUB OF LAFAYETTE, INDIANA.

Other fundraisers took varying forms; at least one club put on a gymnastic exhibition. Clubs in the north tried operating ice-skating parks. A club entertained state legislators.

In-season or out, any excuse was good enough for a banquet, such as club anniversaries. Postgame feasts often followed intercity matches, at which the winner would receive the customary trophy ball, accompanied by speechifying.

Clubs sponsored excursions and 'pic-nics', celebrated weddings, arranged transport if needed to practices and matches, held intrasquad matches in various formats: ('benedicts' v. bachelors was common), provided seating for ladies, and played cricketers, junior, and muffin nines. Occasionally, ads for new members were resorted to. Games were played, both interclub and intrasquad, where prizes or a purse were offered for the best individual performances.

Most clubs did their own field prep, and National Association-member clubs were urged to submit statistical performance summaries for publication; relatively few did so.

Activities were interrupted by holidays, particularly the Fourth, and, in rural areas, harvests.

### **Interclub Relations**



Interclub relations by 1867 were guided in areas familiar with baseball by the established customs of the sport, but in areas where it was new, only by the customs of local organizations in other fields. Most frequently, communication between clubs occurred because of the lack of formal organizations for scheduling matches. Instead, clubs issued and accepted (or declined) matches individually after issuing or receiving a 'challenge', for most, with clubs in their towns and in similar communities in their region.

A 'challenge' example:<sup>7</sup>

LANCASTER, OHIO, June 3d, 1867

*To the President of the Nemean Base Ball Club of Lancaster:*

The first nine of the Junior Base Ball Club of Lancaster, Ohio, being desirous of measuring play with the said Nemean Base Ball Club do hereby issue to the Nemean first nine the following challenge:

ARTICLE I. This challenges the Nemean first nine to play the Junior first nine a match game of nine innings, on or about the 14th day of June 1867, at such time in the day, and on such ground as the Nemean first nine may select.

ART. II. The Junior first nine select for Umpire Wm. Noble, Esq., subject to the approbation of the Nemean Base Ball Club.

ART. III. The match to be governed by the rules and regulations of the American Base Ball Association.

If this challenge is not accepted, with time and place as aforesaid, on or before the 7th day of June, 1867, it shall be deemed equivalent to a declination of said challenge.

"Regards of the Juniors to the Nemeans."

By the President,  
S. C. SHAEFFER.

TOM. MONAGHAN, Sec'y, J. B. B. C.

*To the Junior Base Ball Club, Lancaster, O.*  
GENTLEMEN:—Your note of June 3d is by our Club received, and the matter therein contained acted upon. The challenge is accepted. The match game is to take place on the 14th of June, 1867, at 3½ o'clock, P. M. The rules and regulations indicated by you are satisfactory to us. The Umpire shall be selected according to the same rules in a conference of the Executive Committees of both Clubs; also the grounds.

JOHN SIFFORD,  
GEO. D. LITTLE, } Ex. Com.  
P. M. HEDGES. }

Lancaster, June 4, 1867.

Even when carefully worded as in the example, with written communication the only option in most cases, prevention of misunderstandings could be difficult.

Complaints by clubs about their treatment by other clubs were frequent and wide-ranging and could spill over into fights and taunting. Such disagreements often wound up in local papers, which commonly were in touch through the custom of exchanges. Unsettled areas of the still-evolving National Association rules, like pitching, were often misunderstood from town to town. The haphazard system of selecting an umpire from among the spectators by agreement of the captains immediately before the start of play led to frequent complaints of partiality, which might still happen even in the example, if the Juniors and Nemeans could not agree on an umpire beforehand. Customs around the obligations of host clubs for hospitality varied, and produced accusations of inferior treatment; but formal thanks for good treatment by host clubs were also routine.

There was a certain amount of reluctance on the part of 'city' clubs to schedule 'country' clubs. Even so marginally 'country' a club as the Union of Lansingburgh, New York, 160 miles up the Hudson River Valley from NYC, was dismissed upon its visit to the metropolis to play a prominent city club, as inferior in "their conduct to their umpire, their constant disputing of his decisions, and their indulgence in low repartee and banter with the crowd." More frequently, city objections centered on un-groomed country grounds with trees & fences, unusual dimensions, and sloped playing fields.

Clubs could and did cooperate on matters like sharing a club room and would meet to resolve matters in common. A few regional and state associations already existed by

1867, and such associations were given additional importance when after the season the National Association altered its constitution to allow only representatives of state associations to vote at its annual convention.

### **Conclusion**

The baseball clubs of 1867 were important conduits for spreading the National Association rules nationwide. Notwithstanding the frequency of serious injury to unprotected eyes, bones, and joints, and the occasional fatality, they served as healthy vehicles for the socialization of young men, and can be seen as a refuge for military veterans needing a renewed purpose in life after their service. Today's amateur clubs of age-group players or adult town teams are indeed free to reproduce the active role in their communities assumed by the clubs of 1867. Whether they typically do so at present or more often confine themselves to an end-of-season pizza party is beyond the scope of my research.

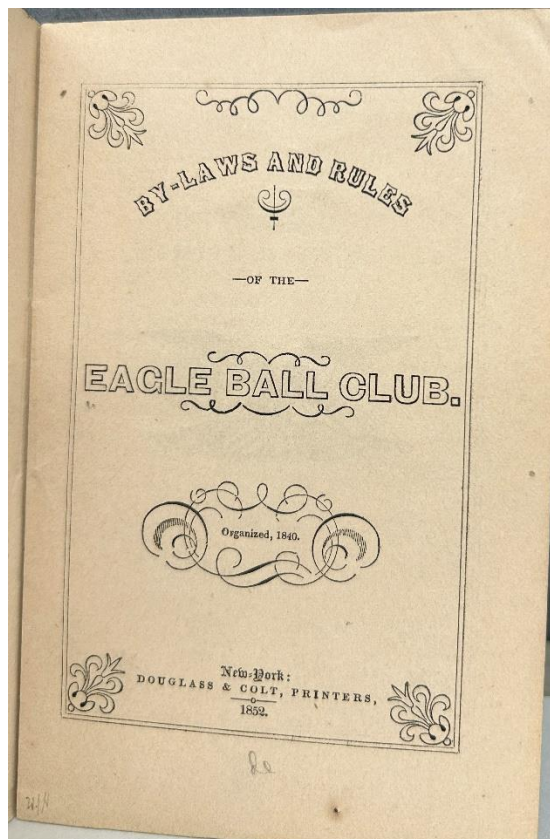
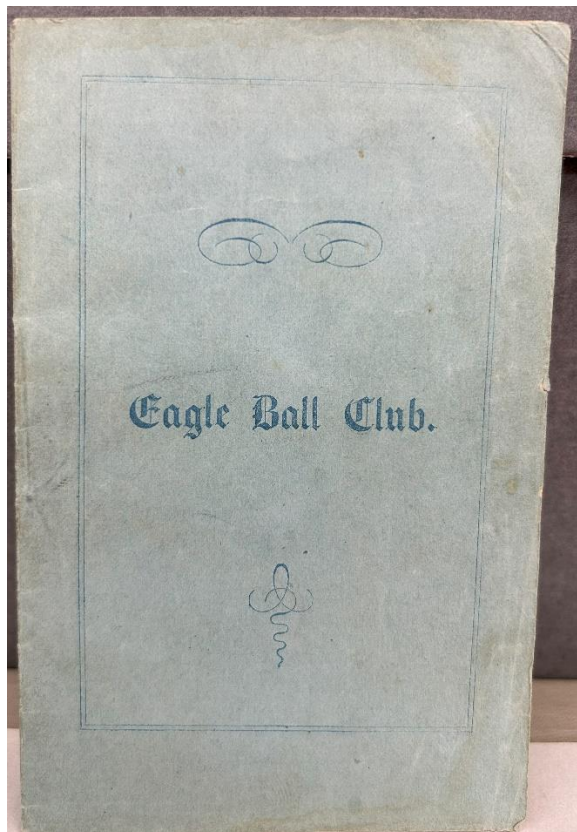
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1. *San Francisco Bulletin*, February 20, 1867.
  2. *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, May 26, 1867.
  3. *Urbana (OH) Union*, September 25, 1867.
  4. *Trenton State Gazette*, March 6, 1867.
  5. *Lafayette (IN) Journal*, January 30, 1867.
  6. *Lafayette (IN) Daily Courier*, November 1, 1867.
  7. *Lancaster (OH) Gazette*, June 6, 1867.

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## **Eagle Ball Club 1852 By-Laws book**

**By Bruce Allardice**

An eight-page pamphlet entitled *By-laws and rules of the Eagle Ball Club* (New York: Douglass & Colt, 1852) may be (after the Knickerbocker Club rules, published in 1848) the second oldest printed book of the rules of base ball.



The pamphlet has a light blue cover, and measures about 4 inches by 6. The club sets an upper limit of 40 members, who paid an initiation fee of \$2, with quarterly dues of \$1.

It appears the club was formed for exercise amongst its members, with little thought of playing other base ball clubs. The rules designate no set number of players, with the members appearing on set days, electing captains of two teams. The club members are to rotate being umpires. Anyone using bad language or disputing an umpire's call is to be fined 25 cents.

The rules of play are similar to those of the more-famed Knickerbocker Base Ball Club. Among the rules:

- 1) The "ball must be pitched, not thrown" (i.e., underhand pitching);
- 2) three batter whiffs constitute an out
- 3) The first bound out rule applies
- 4) No fair/foul rule
- 5) Bases are to be 42 paces apart, home to second and first to third. Which, if the "pace" is measured by the 2.5 feet standard of the team, results in a 75-foot distance from home to first.

Of great interest is the assertion on the title page that his club was "organized in 1840." As such, this would predate the accepted 1845 founding of the Knickerbocker Club.

However, baseball historian Greg Christiano suggests that while the club may have been organized in 1840 and played some form of ball, it didn't adopt "base ball" until the 1850s.

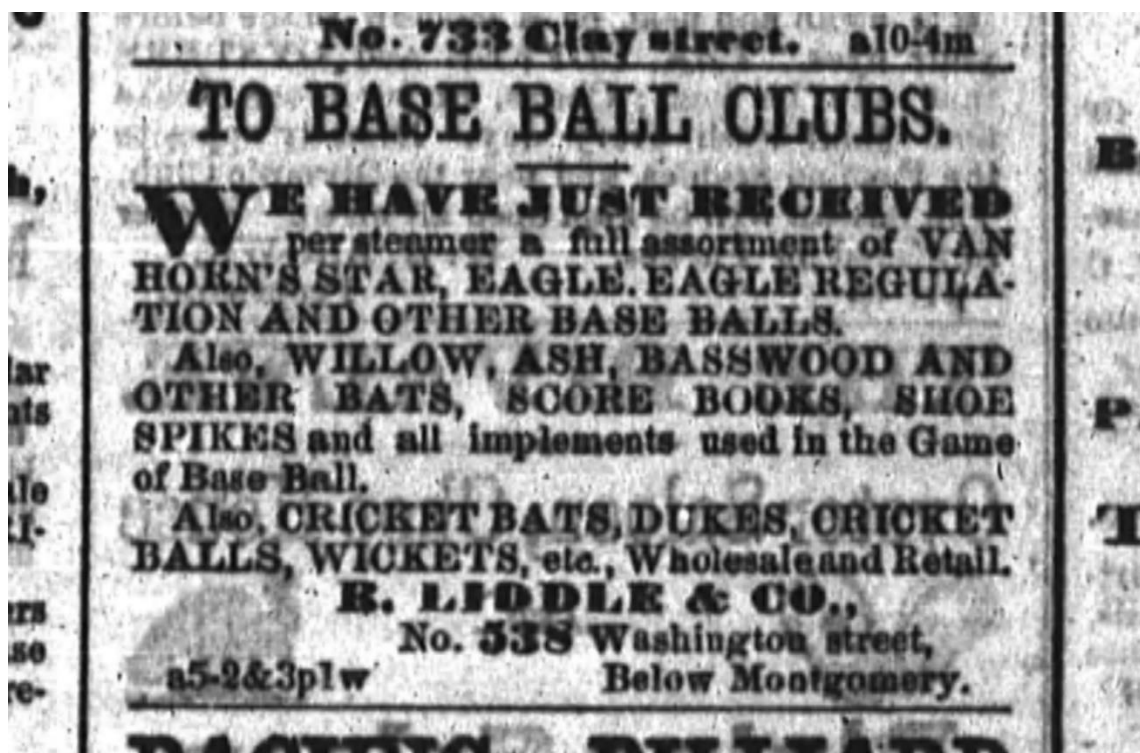
The pamphlet from which these photos are taken, is in the Chicago History Museum. Another copy is in the New York Public Library.

For more on this pamphlet, see John Thorn's MLB blog "Our Game" at <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/origins-of-the-new-york-game-part-3-f5fa7a11e37e> For more on the Eagle Club, see the Protoball entry at [https://protoball.org/Eagle\\_Base\\_Ball\\_Club\\_of\\_New\\_York](https://protoball.org/Eagle_Base_Ball_Club_of_New_York)

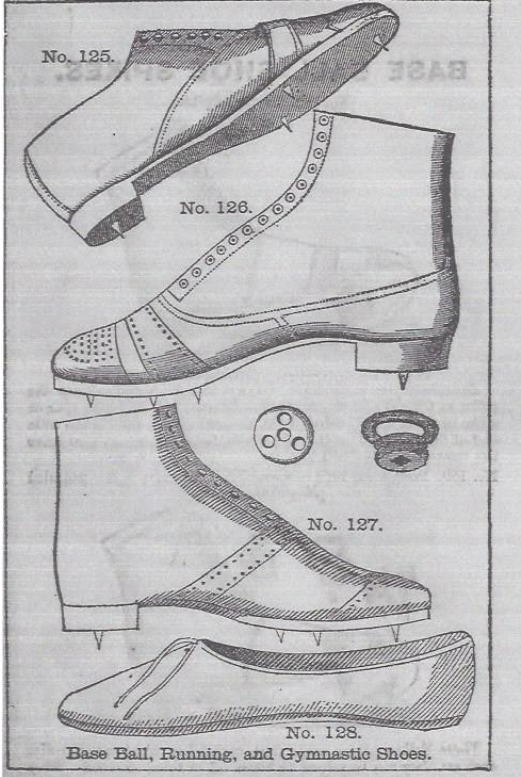
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## Potpourri

### Ads for Early Baseball Equipment



From the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 12, 1867



## BASE BALL SHOE SPIKES.

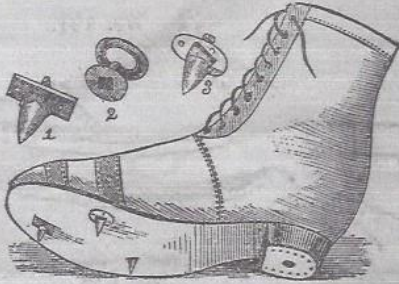
No. 132. Taylor's Spike.



Doz. set.....\$3 00

*Directions for Fastening Taylor's Safety Spike.*—Place the spike on the shoe (as represented in the cut) with the wide spur or spike in front, 1 1-3 inches from the end of the sole to the wide end of the spike. Use an awl to make holes for screws, then drive the screws securely down to place.

No. 129. Peck & Snyder's new and improved Shoe Spike, patented May 10th, 1867.



These Spikes are so made that, with a key which accompanies each set, they can be put on or taken off in three minutes. They can be fastened on any kind of a boot or shoe, and after use in the

field can be worn in the streets without injury to the spikes, shoes, or feet. Fig. 1 represents the round spikes, which can be put on any ordinary boot or shoe after it is made; and with key (Fig. 2) the screws or points can be taken out or inserted at pleasure. Fig. 3, the square or oblong, can be inserted between the soles of the boots or shoes when made to order, the screws or points being inserted or removed at pleasure, same as Fig. 1. Each set is put up in a neat box, and in so small a compass as to be carried in the vest pocket. Per doz. set.....\$12 00

No. 130. Brass Shoe Spikes, English Cricket, set of 8 and screws, doz. set..... 7 00  
 No. 131. Malleable Iron Spikes, set of 8 and screws, doz. set, 2 00

From Peck & Snyder's 1873 Catalog, pp. 15-17.

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## Latest Protoball Additions

As of November 11, 2024, the Protoball **Pre-Pro (pre-1871) Database** contained 12,923 clubs and 7,775 ballgames. Since the last newsletter, 21 clubs and 93 ballgames have been added.

**Project 1865 Completed!**--The ongoing project to enter in **all** ballgames reported through 1865, is basically complete.

**Project World Completed!**—the ongoing project to find the “first” baseball in every country in the world is basically complete. The spread lists 231 countries and political entities, with baseball found in all but five..

**Games Entries.** When Protoball started, 10 years ago, the site boasted 1500 club and game entries, almost all New York entries. Today, that total exceeds 20,600 entries, covering all 50 states and 200+ countries.

Of the U.S. entries, about 12% of the clubs are located in what is now Metropolitan New York. About 60% of the games entered are Metro NYC games

For the so-called “**predecessor**” **games** such as townball and cricket, there are 716 U.S. entries. This can be broken down further, for an indication of the popularity of the most prominent of those games. Cricket is the leader by far, with 343 entries. Town Ball has 154 entries, wicket 97, various cat/old cat games 47, single wicket cricket 25, and round ball 16. As Protoball has (generally) only entered “first” cricket games in each town, a more complete listing of cricket games would outpace town ball entries by even more.

The “**Glossary of Games**” includes 330 predecessor and derivative bat-ball games. The “**Chronology**” has 2,088 entries.

316 early U.S. **baseball fields** are described, including baseball fields in all 50 states.

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## Find of the Month



## Earliest Base Ball in Paris

**Just discovered—a new “first” for baseball in France.** The year is 1868, and the players are Americans resident in Paris. See [https://protoball.org/In\\_France\\_on\\_4\\_July\\_1868](https://protoball.org/In_France_on_4_July_1868)

“Base Ball Abroad. One of the most interesting features of the celebration of the glorious Fourth in Paris by the Americans that chanced to be in that city on our national anniversary, was a game of genuine American Base Ball.

Sides were chosen, bases laid, and the party entered into the game with all the enthusiasm of veteran players. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis, all sections of the country, were represented; and long before the game concluded the players became well acquainted with one another.

The ladies came out and watched the game with great interest, while the French people looked on in amazement as the balls went singing by their ears. At the conclusion of the game, measures were taken to form a club; and it is probable, by this time, the first American Base Ball Club of Paris is in successful operation. There are many young Americans there, in schools and banking-houses; and that the club will be sustained, when once it, is organized, admits of no doubt.”

*Our Boys and Girls*, Aug. 29, 1868

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## Research Requests

**ProtoPix:** We’re slowly adding photos and images of early baseball to the new “ProtoPix” section of Protoball--143 so far. It is hoped to eventually make this a one-stop source of images of early baseball. Submissions would be welcomed.

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## BULLETIN BOARD

**The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Committee Speakers Series** has the following presentations lined up for online viewing for 2024-25:

December 10, 2024– 8:00 PM Eastern, via Zoom. Speaker– Vincent Ciaramella. Topic- “Who Was Charlie Fisher.”

January 14, 2025– 8:00 PM Eastern via Zoom. Speaker– Jack Bales. Topic- “Turkey For Himself, and Buzzard For the Other Clubs: How William Hulbert Abused His Power to Get What He Wanted.”

February 11, 2025– 8:00 PM Eastern via Zoom. Speaker– Jeff Orens. Topic: “Baseball Through the Intertwining Lives of George Wright and Albert Spalding.”

March 11, 2025– 8:00 PM Eastern via Zoom. Speaker– Terry Bohn. Topic- “The Sad Tale of Dapper Dan Lally.”

April 8, 2025– 8:00 PM Eastern via Zoom. Speaker– Kevin Doyle. Topic- “US Navy Baseball 1864- 1910.”

May 13, 2025– 8:00 PM Eastern via Zoom. Speaker– Tim Newby. Topic- “The Original Louisville Slugger: The Life and Times of Forgotten Baseball Legend Pete Browning.”

Links to each session will be distributed by the SABR office the morning of the session. Links will be sent to all Committee members.

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**John Thorn**’s always excellent *Our Games* blog has a Aug. 27th article on the first play-by-play game report, published in the *New York Sunday Mercury*, July 25, 1858. The contending teams were a nine from New York City vs. a nine from Brooklyn. See <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/baseballs-first-play-by-play-3a1b3cec3e5e>

“Out of the Park Baseball” has a long-running thread of photos of pre-1871 ballplayers and clubs. For more, see:  
<https://forums.ootpdevelopments.com/showthread.php?s=c2c0633f24e9df0875929c15e8dd01b2&t=354220>

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Canadian baseball guru **Steve Rennie** is writing a book on early baseball in Ottawa, Canada’s capitol: *From Bytown to the Big Leagues: 150 Years of America's Pastime in Canada's Capital*. It's being published by SABR. Bill Nowlin is co-editor.

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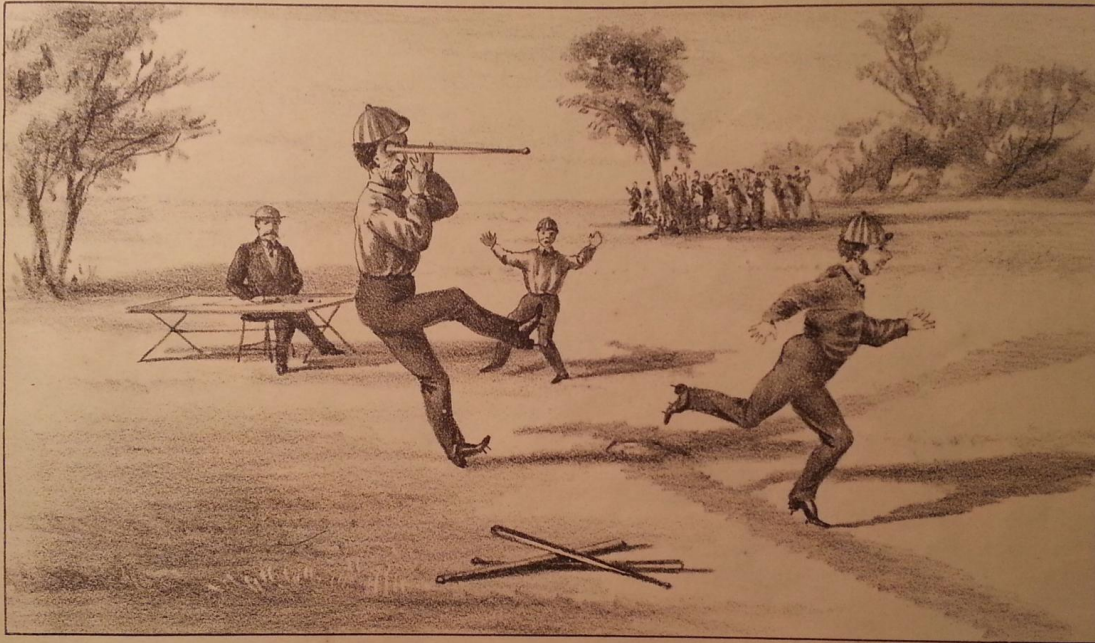
## **2025 Fred Conference**

The 2025 [Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference](#) will be at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. The 16th annual Conference is scheduled for April 25-26, 2025.

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THE START.

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"A HIT, A VERY PALPABLE HIT."

From Van Campen, *Base Ball as Viewed by a Muffin* (1867)