

# Baseball Origins Newsletter

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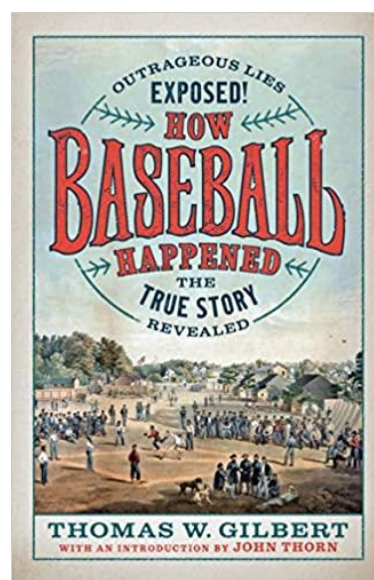
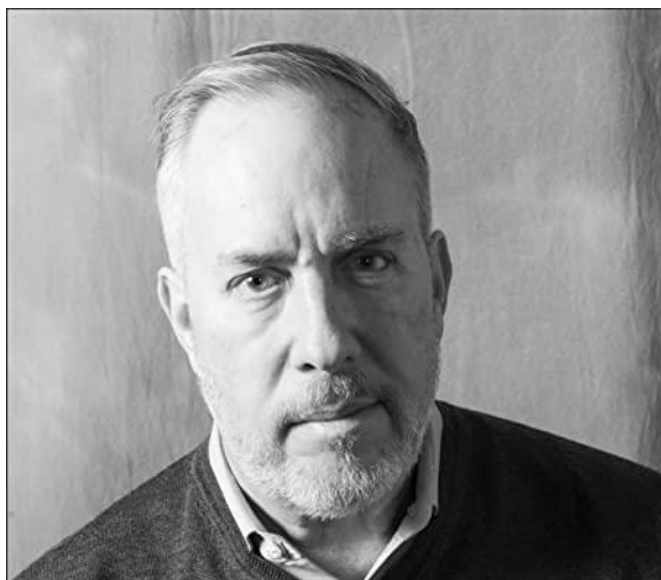
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The baseball origins newsletter is put out by members of SABR's Origins Committee, and the website for baseball's origins, [www.protoball.org](http://www.protoball.org). It is intended to foster research and discussion of the origins of the game of 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) or Larry McCray at [lmccray@mit.edu](mailto:lmccray@mit.edu).

## ***Protoball "Three-hopper to the Infield" Interview With Author Tom Gilbert***

Tom Gilbert published How Baseball Happened\* in October 2020. It includes an introduction by John Thorn -- " a brilliant new approach to our game and its author tells a hundred stories you haven't heard before". Origins researchers will especially appreciate Tom's familiarity with the social and demographic context of the middle 1800s. (One example: What was Elysian Fields all about?) For more on the book, see Tom's webpage at <https://howbaseballhappened.com>.



**Protoball:** You majored in Latin and Greek in college. What can you say about your pathway from that choice to the idea of writing a book on where 1800s base ball came from?

**Tom Gilbert:** Well, few people I know are working in a job or profession related to their undergraduate major, but in my case I think there is more of a connection than meets the eye. The Classics major is uniquely interdisciplinary -- touching on literature, language, history, economics, science and almost everything else -- which both suited me and I think led me to the unusual angle that I followed in investigating the origins of baseball. It was natural for me to ask who, rather than what and when; and to look at baseball not solely as a sport but as a social phenomenon with implications, influences and repercussions far outside the white lines.

**Protoball:** The baseball world long endured a creation myth -- that the game was

invented in Upstate New York by something of an American war hero. Researchers find little solid evidence to support that claim. But do you find other commonly-held ideas about the game's early days that you think may be lack factual support? Are there other current notions that seem suspect?

**Tom Gilbert:** The creation myths were invented for a clear purpose-- to help market amateur and later professional baseball. Incidentally, we should also include the myth that Harry Wright's late 1860s Cincinnati Red Stockings are the "first professional club" or somehow major league/pro baseball's forbears. There is also the ridiculous idea that 19th-century baseball defeated cricket because it somehow suited the American character better, or whatever. There are other vast areas of wrongness in baseball history, as there are in all history. For me, writing history always starts with a question: when I first set out to find an answer, I doubt to myself that I will find anything interesting or new -- yet I have never failed to do so. It is a pretty safe assumption that, no matter what the subject, we historians will have got all or some if it wrong, whether through ignorance, laziness or lack of imagination.

**Protoball:** Would you advise other writers to publish a book during a pandemic?

**Tom Gilbert:** Only if they dislike travel and personal public appearances. Promoting my book during the time of COVID-19 was a technological challenge, but it worked out. I am a homebody and learned to enjoy doing dozens of radio and online interviews per day for weeks and weeks. I don't know if my book sold more or less because of COVID, but it is possible that more people bought and read books because they were stuck in the house. I also do not know if it made any difference that fear of epidemic disease was a key theme of my book, but that fear drove the development of baseball in ways that are hard to appreciate.

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\*Thomas W. Gilbert, [How Baseball Happened: Outrageous Lies Exposed! The True Story Revealed!](#) (David. R. Godine, Publisher, Boston, 2020).

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## A Plague Is Upon Us: Early Baseball Op-Eds

By Steve Sisto

Nowadays, it seems as though there are a lot of people complaining about the current state of the game of baseball. Whether it's the seven-inning double-header rule, instant replay, or steroids -- everywhere you look, somebody's angry about something. And it isn't all that uncommon to hear people say that they wish baseball could go back to how it was in the past, when teams could simply play the game without having to worry about anything else. But the truth is, even if you go back more than 150 years, you can still find people not happy with the game of baseball.

We begin in 1859, where *The Cecil Whig*, a newspaper in Maryland, wrote that:

"However much our boys (from 18 to 48,) may be opposed to balls of some descriptions, they unhesitatingly, in the broad glare of day, in the presence of many who wish to but are afraid, engage in what all moral denominate, if not the basest, at least very *base* ball. A plague is upon us; the bats have left their crevices and fly about in daytime, knock around as if accustomed to the light and turn the boys to circus runners, making them disturb the nervous with their balling."

The language here, while quite aggressive, is also strikingly poetic. Comparing baseball bats to the flying animal of the same name evokes powerful imagery (such as picturing Pete Alonso trying to hit a home run while swinging a *myotis septentrionalis*) that is enough to make even the most ardent baseball fan rethink the game.



(Not a bat used by Pete Alonso)

Next is something even more morbid, from 1870 in *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky: "To the parent whose son dies in infancy there must be something peculiarly soothing in the thought that, no matter what may be the fate of the child in the next world, it can never become a member of a base-ball club in this." Imagine being a newspaper editor who hates baseball so much that you would actually print this for your readers to see? Is having a child who grows up to become a baseball player really so bad? Talk about a tough crowd. At least it appears as though not everyone at the paper

felt the same about baseball as this writer, because this line was printed later that month about an upcoming visit from the Red Stockings: "Such opportunities of witnessing a science in its perfection are extremely rare, and should not be neglected."

Also in 1870, a grand jury in Baltimore declared baseball to be a "nuisance," calling it "the greatest nonsense in the world, and leads to more harm than good." This, of course, begs the question as to why this issue was taken up in the first place. Granted, a grand jury discussing baseball in 1870 is not entirely dissimilar from the 2005 Congressional hearings about steroids in baseball, but it's still a mystery as to why baseball was called "nonsense." Baltimore finally got a professional baseball team 12 years later with the Orioles, and so one would think that the city changed its opinion of the game by then.

Now to the crime beat. In 1858, *The Western Reserve Chronicle* in Ohio reported that two men, Loftus Greary and D. Weed, were fined \$3 each, which they both chose over going to jail for three days. Their crime? Playing baseball on Sunday. So next time you watch your favorite baseball team on a Sunday, don't forget that it used to be illegal. But that's nothing compared to what happened to William R. Grove of Indiana in 1868. At just 17, he was arrested for breaking into boxes at the Post Office and stealing money from them. According to *The Evansville Daily Journal*, "He is of good family and has a good trade, but lost two situations successively by neglecting his business to attend to base ball matters, he being a member of a club. This led him to idleness and crime." With Greary and Weed, they made the mistake of playing baseball on the wrong day of the week and had to pay a fine, but with Grove, it was baseball being blamed for driving him into a life of crime. Is baseball an acceptable defense in a court of law? (Being a Mets fan should be proof of insanity, that's for sure.) Perhaps that will become an article in the future.

Finally, there has been plenty of talk in recent years of an alleged decline in the popularity of baseball, and most people seem to believe that this is a new problem. Baseball is the nation's pastime, after all, so it's logical to think that it has always been loved far and wide. However, that is not the case. According to *The New York Times*: "We observe indications of a decline in interest upon the part of the public in the game of base ball. This is doubtless owing to the unwise enthusiasm of the too ardent admirers of the pastime... If this tendency to immoderation is not speedily checked the game will die out -- consumed by the misplaced fervency and zeal of those who abuse its advantages." Sound like something that might have been written in 2021? Wrong -- Those words were printed in 1867. Major League Baseball didn't even exist yet, and one of the biggest newspapers in the world was already claiming that the sport was in

danger of dying out. Kind of makes you think that today's "problems" with baseball aren't so bad after all, doesn't it?

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# Peanuts, but no Cracker Jack: Explorations into the Early History of Food at Baseball Games<sup>1</sup>

By Bruce Allardice

What baseball fan doesn't know by heart the lyrics of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," with its immortal line "Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks"? This hit 1908 song referenced ballpark food as it existed at the time. Yet food at sporting events pre-dates 1908, pre-dates even the beginning of professional league baseball in 1871. This article will offer some items in that history.



Apple sellers (see lower middle) at baseball game. From an 1867 lithograph.<sup>2</sup>

Foodstuffs have been sold at sporting events since ancient Rome built its Colosseum. In early 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, horse-racing was the most popular spectator sport, and the race tracks routinely sold, or allowed to be sold, viands ranging from "excellently barbecued shoat, with appurtenances and condiments" to "the verriest rot-gut and

Jersey lightning.”<sup>3</sup> These traditions would be familiar to Americans as they began to flock to baseball games.

There are abundant mentions of food sales at pre-1871 baseball games. The first found so far is from the *New York Herald*, July 20, 1860, of a game played the day before, between the Excelsior of Brooklyn and the Atlantic, at the Excelsior Grounds, foot of Court St. The day was hot, and the thousands of fans got thirsty.... "An enterprising German made an excellent thing by carrying the ubiquitous lager around, while boys with peanuts, apples and pies had reason to consider the day as a most auspicious one for them."<sup>4</sup>

Peanuts and popcorn seem to have been staples at early ballgames. Consider this, from a Cincinnati game in 1870:

“The crowd inside was emphatically a noisy one, and kept itself busy by shouting ‘down in front’ to every little ragged urchin who ventured to raise his head, and calling for the ‘Police’ whenever any person left his seat to purchase peanuts or popcorn.”<sup>5</sup>

The first enclosed baseball arena, Cammeyer’s Union Grounds in Brooklyn, featured the viands of Sam Lewis, who

“attended to the inner man in the manner for which he is so well known. Sam’s chowder is becoming celebrated. There is another institution coming prominently before the ball-playing public, and that is the cocoanut-candy man—“fifteen cents a quarter of a pound—ten for five cents.”<sup>6</sup>

The Union Grounds, which opened for baseball in 1862, featured a “saloon.” Captain Samuel Lewis (1825-98) managed the nearby Odeon Gardens, a “fashionable summer resort” which featured ice cream, turtle soup and other delicacies. Lewis also provided the food during the winter, when the Union Grounds were turned into an ice-skating rink. The local newspaper assured the world that “the immortal Sam Lewis keeps a permanent larder and guaranteed that he can satisfy the keenest appetite that comes off the pond.”<sup>7</sup>

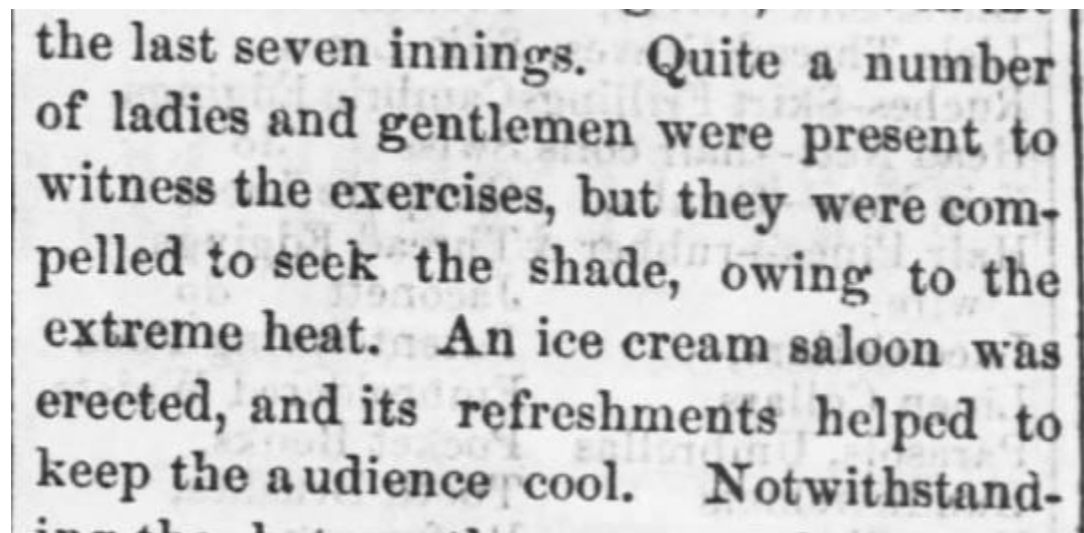
An 1867 game between Cleveland’s Forest City and the Reserve of nearby Hudson, played on a hot day, featured:

“A number of enterprising individuals... selecting eligible sites for business, in the shade of trees, or under awning erected for the purpose, and opened, upon counters improvised from dry-goods boxes, a stock of pop, soda water, ice-cream, fruit, etc., to the great delectation of the large juvenile element in the crowd.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, a July 4<sup>th</sup> game in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania boasted “ice cream, lemonade, spring chickens and fireworks.”<sup>9</sup>

Who goes to a ballgame today and doesn't partake of ballpark beer? The same was true in the 1860s, and it is fitting that one story comes from St. Louis, where Busch Stadium celebrates the brand name of the country's largest beer brewer. In the then heavily Catholic city of St. Louis the Archdiocese forbade Catholics from going to beer taverns on Sunday. Not to be outmaneuvered, the city's Irish and German-Catholic baseball teams got around that restriction by playing Sunday games and bringing their lager with them!

Reporting on an 1867 game, the *Fort Scott (KS) Patriot* noted how refreshing cold ice cream was to fans standing out in the open air:<sup>10</sup>



the last seven innings. Quite a number of ladies and gentlemen were present to witness the exercises, but they were compelled to seek the shade, owing to the extreme heat. An ice cream saloon was erected, and its refreshments helped to keep the audience cool. Notwithstand-

Fans with more elite palates could purchase a three-course meal, complete with a pasta dish, at Brooklyn's Union Grounds in 1862.<sup>11</sup>

All these examples are of food for spectators. But the players were known to partake of what was termed in those more polite days “refreshments.” Early on, ballplayer drinking was discouraged. In 1859 the *New York Herald* archly noted that “No ‘refreshments’ are allowed on the occasion of baseball matches.” Human nature rebelled against this, and particularly in friendly games, alcohol flowed. In an 1867 game between Chicago Printers and Journalists, the players consumed ample quantities of “lemons and lager”—so much so that one baserunner passed out at third base! A similar game in Cleveland between two rival newspapers found the *Cleveland Herald* nine exhibiting “a repugnance to defeat, a desire to smash its opponent, and a willingness to draw aid and comfort from a quart bottle.” The knowledgeable crowd added to the fun with such cries



to the shortstop as “take another swig, Lynett.”<sup>12</sup> The more serious clubs found other ways to refresh their thirst. When the Brooklyn Atlantics visited Irvington, New Jersey, the visitors found “a large can of strawberry lemonade under the scorer’s desk, ready for them when they got warmed up.”<sup>13</sup>

Historian Bill Ryczek characterizes the ballparks of the post-1870 National League as full of vendors selling peanuts, popcorn, pies, candy, fruit and sandwiches. Beer sales alone became an integral part of the revenues of those teams in cities where such sales were allowed. Some historians claim that beer sales basically kept the St. Louis teams financially afloat in the 1880s.<sup>14</sup> But the vendors of the 1880s—and the 2020s—are merely part of a grander tradition that long predates Cracker Jack.

And no, no Cracker Jack, not prior to 1871, at least—it wasn’t invented until 1893, and not perfected until 1896.

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1 The author would like to thank Bob Tholkes and Richard Hershberger for their contributions to this article.

2 Cf. <https://baseballresearcher.blogspot.com/2012/05/there-used-to-be-ballpark-right-here.html>.

3 *The Tennessean*, May 13, 1859; *Opelousas Courier*, May 5, 1853.

4 An 1859 advertisement of “Richardson & McLeod,” “public caterers,” boasted that “Dinner and refreshments served on Cricket and Base Ball Grounds.” It is not specified that the catering occurred during a game. See the *New York Clipper*, July 23, Dec. 17, 1859.

5 *New York Times*, June 20, 1870.

6 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 22, 1867.

7 For Lewis and the Odeon, see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 14, Nov. 8, 1855; Jan. 6, Oct. 26, 1860; Jan. 12, 1864; Dec. 5, 1867; Dec. 3, 1868; The Odeon Gardens were located at the corner of South 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets.

8 *Cleveland Leader*, July 27, 1867.

9 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, July 4, 1867.

10 *Fort Scott Patriot*, July 31, 1867.

11 Peter Morris, *A Game of Inches* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 2:107, citing Pietrusza et al, *The Total Baseball Catalog*, 28.

12 *New York Herald*, Oct. 16, 1859; *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 8, 1867; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Sept. 9, 1867.

13 *New York Clipper*, June 23, 1866.

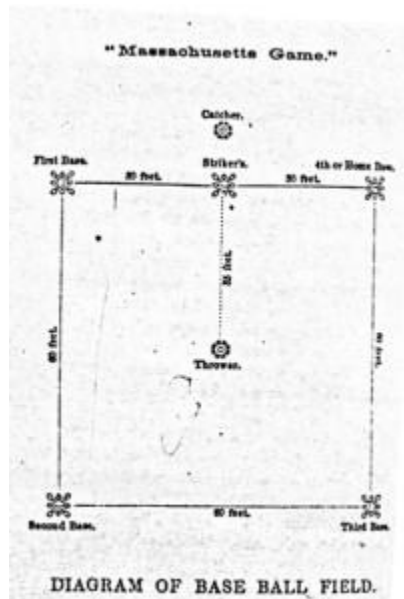
14 William Ryczek, *When Johnny Came Sliding Home* (Jefferson, NC, McFarland, 1998), 35; David Pietrusza, *The Formation ... of 18 Professional Baseball Organizations, 1871 to Present* (Jefferson, NC, McFarland, 1991).

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## The Rules of the Massachusetts Game

In the 1850s there were two competing versions of “base ball.” The more popular, and more familiar to fans today, New York Rules baseball, and a variant seemingly confined to the state of Massachusetts and played there since 1854. Set forth here are the 1858 rules to that Massachusetts game, adopted at a state baseball players convention

meeting in Dedham, Massachusetts, May 13, 1858. Ten clubs attended, a "Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players" was formed, and a committee of five drafted the rules set forth below.<sup>1</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.

For more on the “Massachusetts game” of baseball, see John Thorn, “The Game that Got Away,” Ourgame blog at <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/the-game-that-got-away-a385699cd936>. The main differences between this and the “New York” rules game that soon eclipsed it are that the New York game had foul territory and foul balls, whereas the Massachusetts game didn’t; and the Massachusetts game allowed “soaking”—a fielder could get a runner out by hitting that runner with a thrown ball.

It's easy to see why the New York game swept the nation, and swept Massachusetts—fewer broken skulls!

<sup>1</sup> For the convention, see the *Boston Herald*, May 17, 1858; *Boston Traveler*, May 18, 1858. Text of the rules from Baseball Almanac.

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## Towards a Definition of Baseball

By Bruce Allardice

Canadian baseball historian *par excellence* Bill Humber gave a thought-provoking presentation at this year's Frederick Ivor-Campbell Conference. Among his observations was a reference to how baseball can and should be analyzed, based on a recent book, *On the Origin of Hockey*.<sup>1</sup> Chapter Two of that work asks a very basic question: "What Constitutes Hockey?" It then expands on the definition created by the Society for International Hockey Research (SIHR—sort of the hockey equivalent of SABR), with hockey being:

1. A game played on an ice surface;
2. With two opposing teams;
3. Of skaters;
4. Who use curved sticks;
5. To try and rive a small disk, ball or block;
6. Into or through the opposite goals, with the objective of scoring.

Under the strictest terms of this definition, a game isn't hockey if ANY of these six characteristics is missing. Games considered closest to hockey share most of these characteristics. Thus field hockey, which shares four of the six (missing numbers one and three), is distinct from hockey. The analysis in the *Origin of Hockey* attempts, with some success, to judge variant hockey-like sports by how much they share these characteristics.

Applying this type of analysis to baseball is of course more complex. First off, just because a game is labeled "Baseball" (or variant)<sup>2</sup> doesn't necessarily make it baseball. However, that label creates what the legal profession terms a "rebuttable presumption" that the game is baseball, absent evidence that the game so labeled is recognizably another game such as cricket. Similarly, just because a game has another name, doesn't mean that it isn't baseball. As a poet wrote (in a different context), "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Too many definitions of baseball define the game as its played in 2021, under 2021 rules. Encyclopedia Brittanica, for example, defines baseball as a "game played with a

bat, a ball, and gloves between two teams of nine [players](#) each on a [field](#) with four white bases laid out in a diamond (i.e., a square oriented so that its diagonal line is vertical). Teams alternate positions as batters (offense) and fielders (defense), exchanging places when three members of the batting team are “put out.” As batters, players try to hit the [ball](#) out of the reach of the fielding team and make a complete circuit around the bases for a “run.” The team that scores the most runs in nine innings (times at bat) wins the game.” That definition would exclude a whole generation of early baseball. As historian Richard Hershberger has pointed out, the number of players and bases has often varied. Baseball’s accepted rules changed constantly. Nine inning games were only made the standard in 1857. And pre-1857 games were often played to a set score, usually 21 or 100.

For this article I’m synthesizing and simplifying various definitions given in other sources,<sup>3</sup> with a view to a definition that will differentiate (or not differentiate) baseball from other, similar games. To me, the game of baseball has nine defining characteristics:

1. A game played by two teams, with;
2. “Fair” and “foul” territory; and
3. A pitcher who tosses or throws a ball to a batter, and;
4. A batter who tries to hit that ball;
5. With a bat;
6. To score runs, which runs are created by the batter circling multiple bases to the “Home” plate;
7. In a game whose length is measured by a defined number of outs or runs, where;
8. The winning team scores the most runs, and;
9. The game has rules (hopefully, written rules).

Omitted here as such factors as:

1. Number of players on a side;
2. “Innings” and how they are defined;
3. Rules as to what an “out” is;
4. Ball and strike calling;
5. Umpires;
6. The number of bases;
7. The ballfield;
8. “Fast” pitching (intended to get the batter out, rather than to put the ball in play);
9. Fielding rules;
10. Some non-base marker such as stakes.

Under this definition, games such as softball share these nine essential characteristics and thus come under the subset “baseball.”

Most baseball historians agree that the 1857 baseball convention altered existing baseball rules to where it resembles baseball as we know it today. I would argue that the 1845 Knickerbocker rules game, and the game as played 1845-57, qualify as baseball under the above nine characteristics.

Perhaps the most intriguing criteria is part of number seven--a game defined by outs. Baseball is unique among team sports in that the duration of the modern game is measured by failures (outs) rather than by time (as in football, basketball, soccer and hockey). Yet early games such as Massachusetts-rules baseball<sup>4</sup> were often played to runs rather than outs—the first team scoring 100 being declared the winner. Allowing the game to be limited by number of outs OR runs allows these early games into the baseball fold. This addition might bring a whole series of “Rounders” type bat-ball games under the “baseball” umbrella.

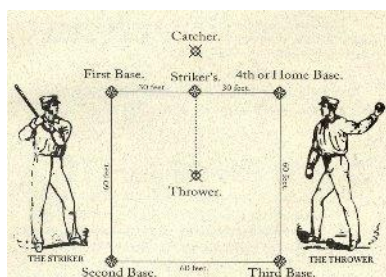


Diagram of Townball

Historians Peter Morris and John Thorn regard the concept of “foul” territory (number two above) as one of baseball’s distinguishing characteristics.<sup>5</sup> This concept was made part of the 1845 Knickerbocker club rules. If applied, this characteristic would result in Philadelphia Town Ball and the Massachusetts game (both played “in the round”) sharing only eight of the nine characteristics. It’s an open question whether sharing eight of the nine qualifies a game as “baseball.” Certainly many in the 1850s regarded the Massachusetts game to be “baseball.” Plus the game was labelled baseball, triggering the rebuttable presumption that a game so labelled should be considered baseball. Some historians today make the argument that applying the foul rule would disqualify that and a whole series of games that are often regarded as being in the baseball “family” of games.

Regarding number three, games such as T-ball (where the batter hits a non-pitched ball) differ. The bat requirement (number five) separates baseball from the numerous predecessor games where the batter hit the ball with his hand, such as Stool-ball, Pize-ball and Tut-ball. Games such as cricket don’t have the batter/runner “circling” multiple bases to reach “home” (number six).

In the 1920s a baseball coach at a West Coast college pioneered a form of baseball where the batter could circle the bases clockwise as well as the accepted counter-

clockwise. Under the above, HOW a batter circled the bases wouldn't matter—this game would be considered baseball.

The Protoball database lists 300 different predecessor and derivative bat-ball games. For many of these games, we don't have enough information on their rules to determine whether the game fits the above definition. Other games differ in three or more of these characteristics. This article is intended to stimulate discussion of this topic. The object here is not to certify (or de-certify) other sports as "baseball," but rather to lay out a framework by which other sports can be said to resemble baseball.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Giden, Patrick Houda, Jean-Patrice Martel, *On the Origin of Hockey* (Chambly, Hockey Origin Publishing, 2014). I've paraphrased the hockey definitions given in that book.

<sup>2</sup> Up until the 1890s, the usual spelling was two words, not one, i.e. base ball.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Richard Hershberger, *Strike Four: The Evolution of Baseball* (New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 3-4.

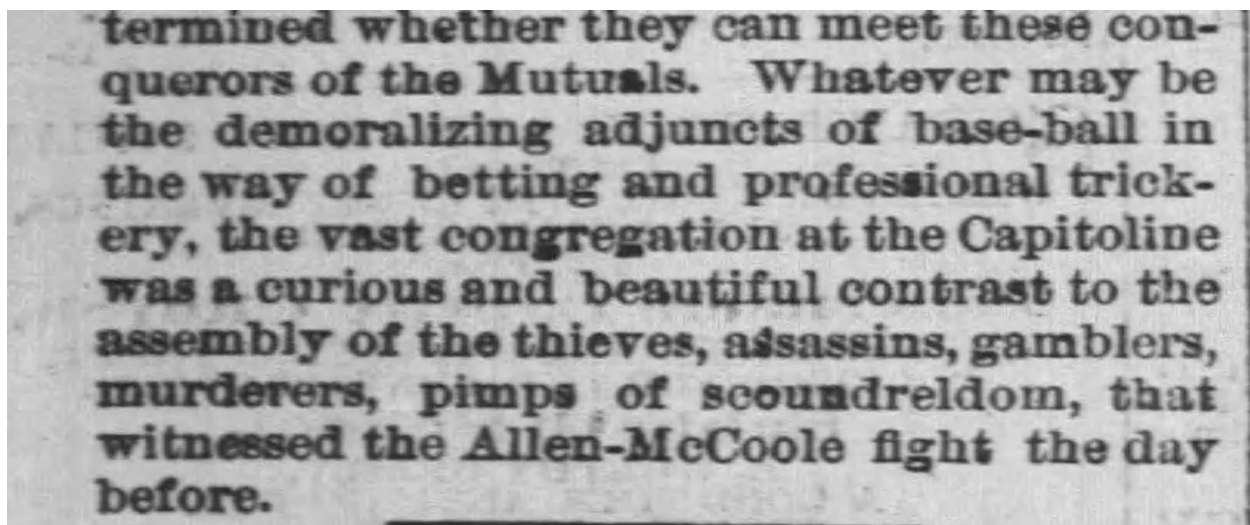
<sup>4</sup> For more on Massachusetts-rules baseball, see John Thorn, "The Game that Got Away" at <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/the-game-that-got-away-a385699cd936>.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Morris, *A Game of Inches* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 39.

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## At Least Baseball is Better than Boxing!

A report on a well-attended game of the New York Mutuals claims that while baseball wagering is awful, at least it's not as bad as in boxing:

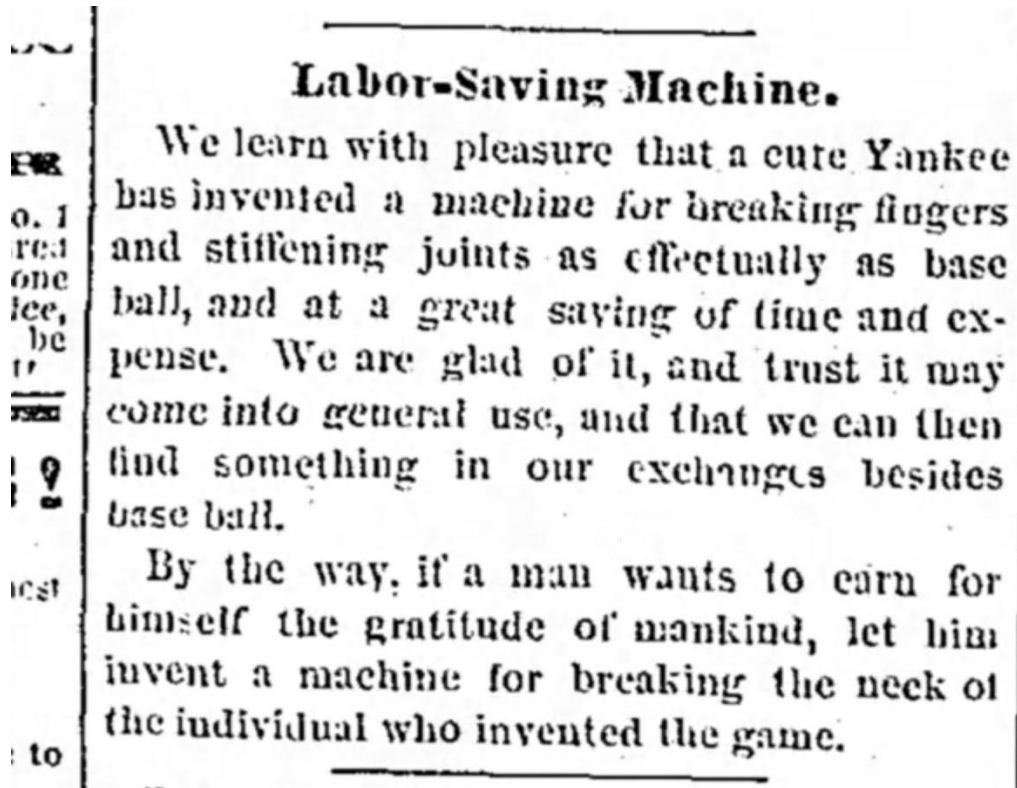


From the *Brooklyn Union*, June 17, 1869.

The Allen-McCoole fight was marked by gamblers who stormed into the ring with pistols and knives, threatening the referee if he made the "wrong" decision about who won the fight. See the *Memphis Public Ledger*, June 16, 1869.

## Baseball a Finger-Breaking Machine?

From Bob Tholkes comes an 1867 newspaper's sardonic look at baseball:



From the *Louisville Daily Courier*, Aug. 21, 1867

Bob opines that the writer aspired to be another Ambrose Bierce.

## No Shifts! (1868 Edition)

Richard Hershberger found an item that might sound familiar to baseball fans in 2021—a controversy over defensive shifts. Evidently nothing is new in baseball.

In 1868 the *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury* criticized Harry Wright's training methods for the Cincinnati Red Stockings, incidentally bringing the shifts into the discussion as unduly English:

“What, again, our correspondent complained of, was Harry Wright’s ridiculous action on the field, forbidding such players as Waterman, Hatfield and Brainerd



to hit at only such balls as he approved. The Athletic felt ashamed to see Americans being bamboozled in their own game, and that by a Britisher. As Wright plays the game, it is English all over, or as far as he can make it so-even to the uniform. ... The Cincinnati Club, if they had any regard for their players, would see to it that the game was not played by one man, no matter how much reliance they may place in his skill, judgment and wisdom. All such nonsense as Wright indulges in about placing the men in position in the field, tends to make them ridiculous in the eyes of other clubs, particularly eastern associations, who know some little about usages, &c." (*Philadelphia Sunday Mercury* August 2, 1868 )

The criticisms seem to have died out after Wright's team won 81 games in a row.

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## Latest Protoball Additions

**End of the Massachusetts Game?**—New light on the virtual end of the Massachusetts variant of Baseball has been added.

"The Massachusetts Base Ball Association, composed of clubs playing what is know [sic] as the Massachusetts game, has been broken up, and most of the clubs are now practicing the National game."

*Boston American Traveler*, July 20, 1867

And yet the Massachusetts game seems to have survived in some of the smaller towns

"Boyd Corey & Co., vs. Clapp & Billings.—A match game of base ball was played at Marlboro, Aug. 1st, between employees of the above mentioned firms., which brought to remembrance, the doings on the ballfield in the "days of yore." The match was played in accordance with the rules of the old "Massachusetts game" and was for a prize of \$100. The game throughout was marked with good plays on both sides and was both interesting and exciting to the lookers on who were numbered by hundreds. The conditions were to play from 2 P.M. until 7 P.M. the club scoring the greatest number of runs at the expiration of that time, to be considered the victors. [The game lasted 28 and a half innings, final score 24 to 23.] *New England Base Ballist* August 20, 1868

See Protoball Chronologies 1867.25.

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## Find of the Month

### First Murder at a Baseball Game?

Joanne Hulbert found what could be the first report of a murder by a base ball bat at a ball game:

P. H. Moor, a stage-driver, was killed in Lower Canada on the 29<sup>th</sup> ult. by Fisher Ames by a blow given with a bat in a passion, during a game of ball play. He was taken up. (*Newark Daily Advertiser* (NJ), pg. 2, September 8, 1838.)

Apparently emotions ran high even in 1838! See Protoball Chronologies, 1838.12.

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## Research Requests

**Media Firsts Project Announced**--The Origins Committee is starting a new initiative called the Media Firsts Project, dedicated to compiling a list of firsts related to baseball and the media. Some of the questions that this project will seek to answer include:

When was the first media credential issued for a baseball game?

When was the first press box established at a baseball venue?

Who was the first baseball player quoted in a newspaper?

What was the first instance of a newspaper publishing betting odds for a baseball game?

And much more!

Anyone interested in contributing to the Media Firsts Project can reach out to Steve Sisto at [stevesisto@gmail.com](mailto:stevesisto@gmail.com).



## BULLETIN BOARD

### [2022 SABR Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference](#)

All SABR members are invited and encouraged to submit a Research Presentation Proposal Abstract on any topic of 19th-century baseball for the 2021 [Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference](#) at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. The 13th annual Ivor-Campbell Conference is scheduled for April 29-30, 2022.



The deadline for proposal Abstracts is **October 31, 2021**. Your abstract must be between 200-400 words for a 20- to 25-minute presentation. Please include name, title, and contact information and send your proposal as a Microsoft Word or PDF attachment to Peter Mancuso at [peterplus4@earthlink.net](mailto:peterplus4@earthlink.net).

Anyone submitting an abstract will be informed individually by November 30 if their proposed presentation received enough of a collective ranking to be one of the presentations in 2022, and they will have until December 10 to confirm that they will register for the two-day 2022 Ivor-Campbell Conference and present their research topic.

For any questions, please contact Peter Mancuso at [peterplus4@earthlink.net](mailto:peterplus4@earthlink.net).

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**Allardice to talk on “Baseball in the Wild West”** –Origins Newsletter Editor Bruce Allardice will kick off SABR’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baseball Committee’s year of presentations with a talk on “Baseball in the Wild West.” It is scheduled for Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm EST, and will be on zoom.

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The virtual **SABR Brooklyn 19th Century Baseball Interdisciplinary Symposium** will take place on November 13-14, 2021.

The two-day online symposium, hosted by the [SABR Nineteenth Century Committee](#), will be devoted to 19th-century baseball as it was played and evolved in Brooklyn.

- **Register:** [Click here to register online for the symposium.](#)
- **Cost:** \$15 per person.
- **Schedule:** [Click here to download the full schedule](#) (PDF). Online Zoom sessions will be held from 12:00-5:30 p.m. EDT on Saturday, November 13, and 12:30-2:00 p.m. EDT on Sunday, November 14.

Guest speakers are expected to include keynote speaker **Dr. Thomas J. Campanella**, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and City Planning at Cornell University and Historian-in-Residence of the New York City Parks Department; **John Thorn**, MLB's Official Historian; a Panel Discussion on "Was Brooklyn the Actual Birthplace of Baseball?" featuring **David Dyte**, **Tom Gilbert** and **Bill Ryczek**; Research Presentations by **Ralph Carhart**, **Brian Sheehy**, **Tom Gilbert**, and **Justin Mckinney**; and a video tour of Brooklyn's historic baseball places with Tom Gilbert.

The 2021 Brooklyn 19th Century Baseball Interdisciplinary Symposium will be the fifth in our city-specific series. It should be a day of learning and fun, and an opportunity to exchange questions and comments among both presenters and symposium attendees. Previous symposiums were held in New York City (2014), Philadelphia (2016), Cleveland (2018), and Minneapolis (2019).

For more information, contact [Peter Mancuso](#).

