

Baseball Origins Newsletter

Volume One, Number 1

February 2021

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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. 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 or Larry McCray at lmccray@mit.edu.

Rounders---Baseball's True Origin?

Editors Note: Each issue we plan to highlight a bat-ball game that preceded baseball.

The little k Play.



BASE-BALL.

THE *Ball* once struck off,
Away flies the *Boy*
To the next destin'd Post,
And then Home with Joy.

MORAL.

Thus *Britons* for Lucre
Fly over the Main ;
But, with Pleasure transported,
Return back again.

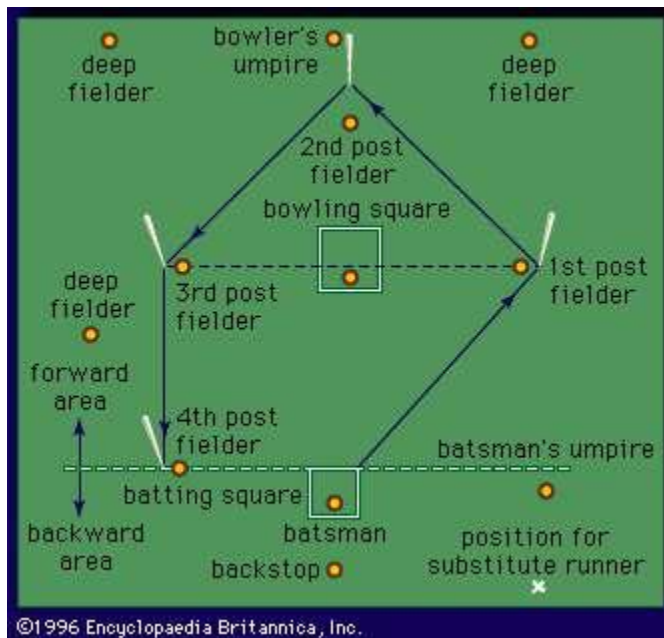
TRAP-

A Little Pretty Pocket-Book (1744)

Several early bat-ball games bore resemblance to our modern baseball. These games (among them, Stool-ball, Pize-ball, Tut ball and Rounders) all featured striking a ball with a bat or one's hand, then running in a circle around four markers. In 1828, Englishman William Clarke published the second edition of *The Boy's Own Book*, which included the rules of rounders and

also the first printed description in English of a bat and ball base-running game played on a diamond.

Alice Gomme, in her 1894 work on British games,¹ writes that Rounders was generally played by boys, with one side (called the ins) batting while the other side (called the outs) fielding. A batsman would try to hit the ball, with three swinging strikes producing an “out.” The batter ran on any hit, however light, or on his third strike. There were no called balls or called strikes. Instead of throwing this ball to a baseman it was thrown at the baserunner himself. If a hit was made by a thrower, the runner was out. The bases were usually posts or stakes, but sometimes stones. These had to be circled or touched by the runner, and if the batter/runner made it safely around the bases he was said to have scored a “rounder.” There were no fair or foul balls. The game was played between teams or sides of equal numbers, usually from seven to ten.



Modern Rounders field

At first glance, Rounders bears a resemblance to baseball in its early stages, particularly the Massachusetts form of baseball that allowed “soaking” (being called out if hit by a thrown ball). This resemblance led early baseball chroniclers such as English-born Henry Chadwick (the pioneer baseball reporter and Hall of Famer) to suggest that the game of baseball was based on English immigrants who brought Rounders with them to the New World. Chadwick’s thesis met with strong reaction, by Americans who felt the game was distinctly American in origin. Prominent among these was Albert Spalding, another of baseball’s giants, who chaired Major League Baseball’s committee looking for the origins of the game. This committee concluded—on evidence that has been discredited by later historiographers—that baseball was invented in America, in 1839, in Cooperstown New York, with future General Abner Doubleday being

instrumental in its founding. While the “Doubleday Myth” has been debunked, the Rounders-to-Baseball thesis can now also be labeled as unproven.

Historian David Block has written the most recent, and most authoritative, take on Rounders and Baseball. In his seminal *Baseball Before We Knew It*, Block devotes a whole chapter to the controversy, a chapter provocatively titled “Rounders, Schmounders.” Block acknowledges that Chadwick’s thesis “carried great weight” in the era in which it was advanced. However, Chadwick offered no definitive link between the two games, and instead relied “solely upon the apparent similarities between the two games: pitching, batting, fielding, and base running.” Further study by historian Robert Henderson backed up the Rounders-to-Baseball theory. But Block convincingly demonstrates that prior to 1828, the name “rounders” cannot be found in any contemporary account, whereas the term baseball (or variant) occurs often. As Block sees it, “rounders” only came into common usage as an alternate term for baseball, not vice-versa.²

If history can be decided by a consensus of historians, the modern consensus is that what we know today as Baseball evolved in the United States, from a number of bat-ball games,³ albeit with new rules that separated Baseball from those other bat-ball games.

¹ Alice Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland* (2 vols, New York Dover, 1964 reprint of 1894 original).

² David Block, *Baseball before we knew it. A search for the roots of the game* (Lincoln, Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2005). See also David Block, *Pastime Lost: The Humble, Original, and Now Completely Forgotten Game of English Baseball* (Lincoln, Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2019). Ironically, Block is a winner of SABR’s Chadwick Award.

³ The Protoball website lists over 250 related ball and bat-ball games

"Such Tumbles, Such Collisions": How "The Fat Mens' Base Ball Game" Changed Sportswriting in One Massachusetts Town

Editor’s Note: The game of baseball was originally intended to be fun for the players, as well as the spectators. As such, early baseball variants included “bachelors v. benedicts” (single men v. married) contests, and baseball on ice. Another early variant was “fat” or “fat vs. lean” baseball. As early as 1858, “fat” and “lean” clubs are (more or less seriously) playing each other. In that vein, we present a great article from SABR member Steve Sisto about an early “fat mens” game, and how the local newspapers covered it.



Silver City, NM, “fats” (on the right) v. “leans,” 1887

By Steve Sisto

On October 29, 1870, a baseball game like no other was played in the town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Billed in *The Berkshire County Eagle* as "Ten Thousand Pounds — The Heaviest Base Ball Club in the World," the game featured men from the town who weighed 200 pounds or more.¹ The game, gimmicky as it was, proved to be a turning point for how local newspapers viewed baseball. Previously, most games were given a one-sentence blurb, such as: "The Haymakers of Lansingburg beat the Mutuels in a game of base-ball at Troy on Thursday, the score being 32 to 20" or "At a base-ball game played in this town on Saturday, between the Old Elm Club and the Williams College nine, the former victorious, 34 to 10," with lengthier recaps and box scores being exceptionally rare.² With this game, however, both *The Eagle* and its crosstown rival, *The Pittsfield Sun*, published full-column write-ups, one of the few times that both papers printed accounts of the same game. Being that the two articles are different from each other suggests that the papers sent their own correspondents to cover the game instead of simply publishing accounts written by the teams themselves, which is what appeared to have happened previously.

The game was first promoted in the October 27 issue of *The Eagle*, promising "one of the most tremendous games of base-ball this or any other town ever saw." The article tried to play up the possibility of increased danger of heavier men playing baseball, mentioning that "a competent corps of surgeons will be on hand to render services in case of accidents. Admission to the game was 10 cents, 25 cents for carriages, with half of the proceeds going to Pittsfield's Old Elm Club and the other half to charity.

Of the 40 men who volunteered to play, 27 showed up to the field, listed as follows:

Name	Age	Weight
Ensign H. Kellogg	57	244

George S. Hayes	50	225
John C. Parker	49	202
Dr. A. M. Smith	51	213
Henry Wells	50	210
F. I. Downs	43	205
David A. Clary	47	208
E. S. Francis	34	201 ½
Joseph Moran	39	228
George W. Campbell	65	201
Thomas F. Plunkett	65	225
Grove E. Hulbert	42	209
Cebra Quackenbush	32	213
D. C. Munyan	42	204
Oliver Root	45	203
John C. West	59	210
A. H. Munyan	40	245
George S. Willis	60	215
Charles Atkinson	60	210
James A. Bridges	45	209
E. A. Davis	37	225
William R. Plunkett	38	210
Thomas F. Plunkett Jr.	26	200
Israel C. Weller	30	203
Liberty Stevens	50	205

Washington M. Root	47	200
Alonzo E. Goodrich	55	230

The players had a combined weight of 5,753 pounds, falling well short of the originally advertised "Ten Thousand Pounds." The average weight was 213 pounds, compared to the 2020 major league average of 210 pounds (the heaviest team was the Toronto Blue Jays at an average of 216 pounds), while the average age was 46 years old.

Several of the men were no strangers to organized baseball, having played with local teams for multiple years. Kellogg and the two elder Plunketts, for example, were members of the Pittsfield Base Ball Club dating back to the 1850s, while the Root and West men had played for the Old Elm Club.

The two captains were George Willis, who had 13 men on his team, and Ensign Kellogg, who had 12.³ Attempts were made to list the rosters and lineups for each team, but due to a lack of clarity in *The Eagle's* article, it became impossible to do so with complete accuracy. Local man W. H. Sloan was named umpire, and the scoring was done by J. D. Francis and H. A. Brewster. Willis, batting leadoff, stepped up to the plate for the first at-bat of the game, while Weller took the mound for Kellogg's squad. The weather was described by *The Sun* as "blustering, cold and uncomfortable as one could well endure," but even so, more than 800 spectators were said to be in attendance.⁴



Ensign H. Kellogg, one of the team's captains



Israel Weller, pitcher for Kellogg's squad⁵

As for each of the newspapers' accounts of the game, there were massive differences between their reporting. Perhaps the best way to describe it is to put it into modern broadcasting terms: *The Eagle* did the play-by-play while *The Sun* provided the color commentary. The former gave an inning-by-inning breakdown of each at-bat and run scored, whereas the latter wrote about the experience of watching heavysset, mostly middle-aged men gallop and frolic around the field. For example, here is how *The Eagle* summarized the first inning:

Willis was the first striker, and he, sending an astonishing daisy cutter to the left field, thundered down the path to the first base, where he breathed a minute, then tore away to second. Parker took the bat next but went out on a foul bound caught scientifically by Weller, Willis attempting to make his third when the ball was struck, was put out by Kellogg throwing to Campbell. W. R. Plunkett struck next, sending the ball well out and making the bases without hinderance. Munyan also struck well but was left at second by West, who went out on a foul bound taken by Weller. Plunkett made his tally. Side out.

Kellogg took the bat amid the wildest cheers. But the pitcher made such bad work of it that it was impossible to hit the ball, so Kellogg went out without showing what he was really capable of. Francis followed him and got a first rate hit, but the junior Plunkett and Weller were left on bases by Clary and Smith going out to Willis, the catcher, the first on a foul bound and the second on three strikes. Francis made a tally and the score stood 1 to 1.⁶

Other than the use of the rarely used term "daisy cutter," nothing too fancy or superfluous about that description. Despite the fact that this was *The Eagle's* first detailed article about baseball, the paper succeeded in providing a clear account of the game, suggesting that the writer was knowledgeable about the sport. Meanwhile, this was from the article in *The Sun*:

Such tumbles, such collisions! ... But collisions were nothing in the comical way in comparison with the queer gaits some of the solids took on in running the bases — or trying to run them; for success was just the reverse of an assured fact. And, after all, running the bases wasn't so funny by half as the insanely desperate efforts in chasing a scudding ball or catching it on a fly.

And then, think of the momentum acquired by one of those huge masses in giving a vigorous stroke of the bat. You couldn't have told "Hale" from a Brobdingnagian top, as he spun helplessly round after a prodigious effort of that kind. But we forbear -- or rather give up in despair of giving any adequate picture of this gigantic piece of fun, which was enjoyed as hugely by the players as by the spectators. We only regret that as the game proceeded and the green hands began to get initiated into its science, and a little practice warmed up the unaccustomed limbs, the play began to get too good, and the fun began to wane while the vulgar interest in winning increased.

Other than listing the final score, *The Sun* gives no details about the game itself, choosing to go a more entertaining route through jokes and anecdotes. That is not to say that *The Eagle* didn't also have fun in its reporting; read this description of a sixth inning home run by Kellogg:

Kellogg then rolled into position amid the breathless attention of the spectators. He closed his mouth hard shut; poised himself over the base in admirable attitude; tapped the ground impatient for a strike; struck, finally, with such force that he spun dizzily round half a dozen times with the club at arm's length, to the imminent danger of the shortstop and the catcher, and then started for first amid a shower of vest buttons. He rested a second at first and then went tearing round the bases and made a tally amid prolonged applause.

Some of the biggest highlights included back-to-back six-run innings by Kellogg's team to take the lead late in the game, followed by a valiant five-run inning by Willis' squad in the top of the eighth, which was the final inning. In the end, Kellogg's side came out on top, 16-12. Seventeen of the game's 28 total runs were scored in the last two innings, and there were only four half-innings with no runs scored. Francis, Moran, and William Plunkett led the scoring with three runs apiece. There were at least six home runs hit (the writing makes it hard at times to discern which runs were home runs and which were not.) The game was played in about three hours. Here is the full inning-by-inning breakdown:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	F
Willis	1	0	4	0	1	0	1	5	12
Kellogg	1	1	0	1	1	6	6	X	16

Following the game, the players met for dinner at Pittsfield's American House, which was owned by Cebra Quackenbush. When it came to eating, *The Sun* wrote, "Not a man of them was out of practice in that game."

What's very interesting is how each paper reported on baseball in the years following this article. *The Eagle* continued to publish scores and detailed accounts, but also began writing about baseball from more of a news perspective as well. In 1871, for example, *The Eagle* had stories about a Massachusetts Senate bill to incorporate the Boston Base Ball Club and the Old Elm Base Ball Club's annual meeting.⁷ *The Eagle* also took a more personal involvement in baseball, writing in support of Pittsfield clubs, not dissimilar to how today's local news organizations report on their hometown teams. *The Sun*, on the other hand, didn't change its approach to baseball reporting immediately after the "Fat Mens' Base Ball Game," going back to printing nothing beyond one-liners about games. It wasn't until June 1877 that another in-depth article with a box score appeared in *The Sun*.⁸ The contributions of Henry Chadwick to the field of sports journalism are well documented and cannot be diminished, but it is quite fascinating to see how the rivalry between two small town papers also helped evolve the practice of baseball writing as far back as 1870.

¹ *The Berkshire County Eagle*, October 27, 1870.

² *The Berkshire County Eagle*, July 15, 1869; *The Pittsfield Sun*, June 16, 1870.

³ Ensign H. Kellogg (1812-82) was a U. S. Congressman. George S. Willis (1810-80) founded the local gas company.

⁴ "The 200 Pounder Base Ball Play," *The Pittsfield Sun*, November 3, 1870.

⁵ Civil War veteran Israel Casey Weller (1840-1900), who owned a tannery in Pittsfield.

⁶ "The Big Base Ballists," *The Berkshire County Eagle*, November 3, 1870.

⁷ *The Berkshire County Eagle*, March 16, 1871; *The Berkshire County Eagle*, April 6, 1871.

⁸ "Base Ball — Buckeyes vs. Pittsfields," *The Pittsfield Sun*, June 27, 1877.

The First Baseball Game (and Baseball Club) in Mexico

By Bruce Allardice

Editor's Note: Another recurring feature of this newsletter will be articles on the expansion of baseball prior to 1871, when professional baseball leagues began. The article below was originally published in John Thorne's MLB history blog, "Our Game."

The United States' neighbor to the south, Mexico, has in the last 100 years been a baseball hotbed, with its own Baseball Leagues, Mexican-born MLB stars such as Fernando Valenzuela, and even MLB games played in cities such as Monterrey.

Less well-known, and certainly less well-researched, are the origins of the game in Mexico. Traditional histories have focused on games played in Mexico by U.S. soldiers and sailors during the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. However, given this early date, it is doubtful that the bat-ball games played were New York-rules baseball. More likely, the games were some predecessor game, such as Town Ball. In any event, the game didn't seem to catch on with the locals.¹

Other published histories point to 1882 games played in Mexico City, by teams of Americans resident in that city, or 1887, when a league of amateur baseball clubs, including some Latino players and clubs, formed in Mexico City, as marking the start of baseball in Mexico.² However, to me this raised the question of why baseball came to Mexico so late. After all, prior to 1882, baseball had spread to areas much further away than Mexico, places such as Hawaii, China, Japan, Alaska, Scotland, and Cuba.³ This prompted my quest to find the "first game" in Mexico, and with that, the "first Mexican" baseball club.

Logically, the focus of such a search should start with those parts of Mexico that are closest to the U.S. In the era after the American Civil War, the standard points of entry to Mexico were El Paso, Laredo, and Brownsville, Texas, with their corresponding across-the-Rio-Grande

neighboring Mexican cities of Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros. Baseball started in Laredo and El Paso relatively late, but in Brownsville as early as 1866.⁴ Thus, I targeted Brownsville and Matamoros.



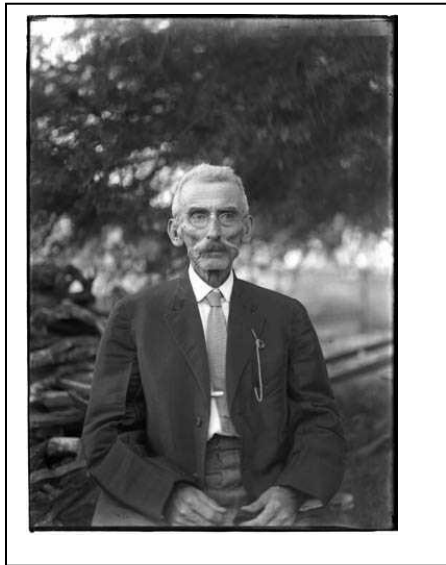
Matamoros in 1863, from *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Dec. 5, 1863

Brownsville, Texas developed as the southernmost port in Texas, a supply base for the US army garrisons at nearby Fort Brown and along the border with Mexico. The city was an “army town,” and attracted many northern-born settlers looking for commercial opportunities. Unlike other areas of Texas, this meant settlers who were potentially familiar with the new game of baseball, as well as garrison soldiers who grew up in New York City and had played the game already. The Rio Grande River separating Brownsville and its Mexican counterpart, Matamoros, was (and is) narrow. The two cities developed into what one early history called twin cities, with goods and people crossing from the one to the other every day.⁵ The American Civil War expanded the links between the two cities. At the start of the War, the Union navy blockaded all southern seaports, including Brownsville. However, under international law, the Union navy could not blockade Mexico, including Matamoros. In response the Confederacy transported cotton to the Rio Grande Valley and crossed it over to Matamoros, shipped it out, and in return imported into Matamoros needed war supplies such as rifles. Texans flocked to Matamoros to manage this trade, further cementing the American presence in the city.⁶

While newspaper runs from Matamoros for the 1860s and 1870s don't exist, scholars can access the Brownsville *Ranchero* online. This newspaper, edited by a northern-born Confederate army

sympathizer, was even published in Matamoros in 1865 and 1866, when the Union army occupying authorities banned its publication in Texas.

Fortunately for historians like myself, the *Ranchero* devoted time and space reporting local baseball games. The first known baseball game in Brownsville was played Nov. 22, 1866, between the 1st and 2nd nines of the Rio Grande Base Ball Club. The first nine won 15-6, in a 5-inning game.⁷ By 1867 games were regularly being played by the soldiers of the various regiments stationed at Brownsville. These games were generally played on the parade grounds of Fort Brown, the army post just southeast of Brownsville, and could easily be viewed from the Matamoros side of the river.⁸



The first definite report of baseball in Matamoros can be found late in 1868. On Dec. 16th the “Union” Base Ball Club of Matamoros sent a challenge to J. F. Cummings of the Brownsville Rio Grande club to play a game on Christmas Day in Brownsville, the game to be played under the New York rules of 1866. The challenge is signed by “Jos. F. Medrano,” club captain, “H.D. Schreck,” club Treasurer, and “Ed. N. Caceres,” club Secretary.⁹ I’ve identified these individuals as youthful, middle class Matamoros residents--Jose Telesforo Medrano Montalvo (1849-1932), Enrique (Henry) Schreck Munoz (1849-86), and Eduardo Nunez de Caceres Jiminez (1851-91).¹⁰

Jose Medrano, later in life, from Madeleine Spangler

The game was played on Dec. 25th, and the next issue of the *Ranchero* ran a full report.

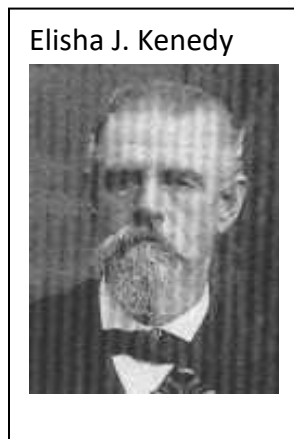
The Base Ball Match

On Christmas day the matched game of Base Ball between the Union Club of Matamoros and the Rio Grande Club of this city; came off on the grounds of the latter named club, with the following result :

UNION.		RIO GRANDE.	
H Schreck, c	5 4	J Deneet, p	3 4
P Garcia, 1 b	3 3	C T Moore, c	4 3
P Bree, r f	5 4	D C Evans, ss	5 1
M Bayardo, 2b	5 3	H Brainard 2b	3 3
K Bree 3 b	5 4	W Sherw'd 1b	3 2
J Medrano, p	6 3	F Cumming 1	2 5
A Cavazos, ss	6 2	F Mason, 3 b	6 1
C R. Allen, 1 f	7 1	B Foster, r f	3 3
J Bar-below, cf	5 3	C Sherwood cf	3 4
Total		49 27	32 27
INNINGS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9			
UNION		11 4 3 0 3 8 14 3 3-49	
RIO GRANDE		2 0 2 1 6 2 2 7 10-32	
Umpire, Angel Maiz. Scorers, J. M. Partearoyo and L. Kowolski.			

Brownsville *Ranchero*, Dec. 27, 1868

As can be seen, the Mexican team won rather easily. The above-named Schreck and Medrano played for the Union. The other players for the Union, and the umpire, have Hispanic names, and several can be identified as Matamoros residents.¹¹



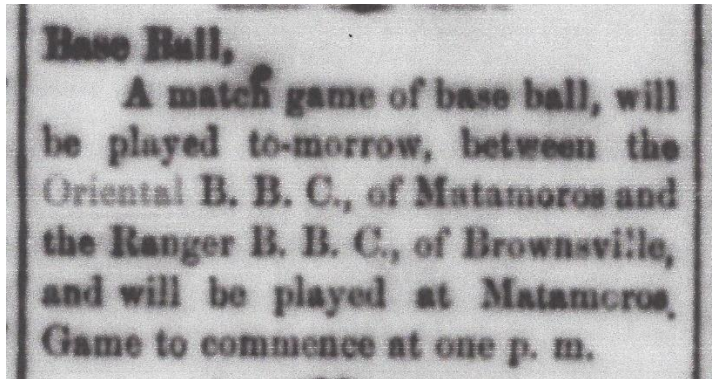
Elisha J. Kenedy

Late 1869 (games were generally played in the winter in this hot climate) saw other games played by the Union Club. A November game featured a soldier club playing a “picked nine” of civilians from the Rio Grande (4) and Union (5) clubs. The fact that Mexicans from Matamoros could be so readily mix with Anglos from Brownsville signifies both the good relations the two had, and the respect the Americans had for the Mexicans’ ballplaying abilities. Among the picked nine was “Kenedy,” presumably Elisha J. Kenedy (1838-1900), president of the Rio Grande Club. Elisha’s brother Mifflin Kenedy, the wealthiest man in Brownsville, was the business partner of Richard King, founder of the legendary King Ranch. The fact that a Kenedy

headed and played for the local baseball club confirms the high social status the game enjoyed in Brownsville and Matamoros.¹²

A month later the Union Club played a “championship” series with the McClellan Club of Fort Brown, the games being played Dec. 12, 1869, and Jan. 16, 1870. The Union Club lost the first game, 22-16, but won the rematch, 38-30. It is unclear where the first game was played, but the second was played at Fort Brown.¹³

The first verified baseball game in Matamoros was played Sept. 18, 1870 between the Oriental Club of Matamoros, and the Ranger Club of Brownsville. These were “new” clubs—the Rangers are first mentioned by the *Ranchero* in 1870, and this is the first mention of the Oriental. Presumably the Oriental club comprised members of the Union Club, though unfortunately the *Ranchero* didn’t report on this game or give the names of the players.¹⁴



Brownsville *Ranchero*, Sept. 17, 1870

Major League Baseball is increasingly international, and the players increasingly Latino. This article makes clear that baseball in Mexico and Latin America has very early roots. The Matamoros Union Club of 1868 is the first baseball club yet found In Mexico. It predates “first clubs” in two states of the U.S.¹⁵ It may be the first Latino baseball club of Latin America, depending on how one evaluates the credibility of stories of early clubs in Cuba.¹⁶ And the 1870 game in Matamoros is the first verified game in Mexico played under the rules of baseball.

¹ See Cesar Gonzalez Gomez, “March, Conquest, and Play Ball. The Game in the Mexican-American War, 1846-1848,” *Base Ball*, Fall 2013, 13-22. See www.Protoball.org for more on early baseball in Mexico and the United States.

² See Protoball.org and sources cited therein. See also Alan Klein, *Baseball on the Border. A Tale of Two Laredos* (Princeton U. Press, 1997); Peter Bjarkman, *Diamonds Around the Globe. The Encyclopedia of International Baseball* (Greenwood Pub. Group, 2005); William Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (U. of Nebraska Press, 2004). In his blog, latinbaseballorigins.wordpress.com, Cesar Gonzalez Gomez identifies an Oct. 21, 1869 game played at Fort Brown, Brownsville, by the Union Club of Matamoros. as the first game by a Mexican club.

³ Protoball.org.

⁴ Brownsville in 1866; Laredo in 1879; El Paso in 1883. See Protoball.org for baseball in their Mexican counterparts.

⁵ For more on these two cities, see W.H. Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border...* (1893).

⁶ See Jerry Don Thompson and Lawrence T. Jones, *Civil War and Revolution on the Rio Grande Frontier* (Texas State Historical Assn., 2004) for a history of the Civil War on the Rio Grande. Unfortunately for the Confederacy, at the time south Texas wasn’t connected by railroad to the rest of the Confederacy, and goods to and from Brownsville had to be hauled by wagon trains across hundreds of miles of dirt roads. These transportation difficulties reduced the flow of needed supplies to a trickle.

⁷ Brownsville *Daily Ranchero*, Nov. 23, 1866.

⁸ Cf. Brownsville *Daily Ranchero*, Feb. 21, 1867, Oct. 23, 1869, Sept. 22, 1870; *New York Clipper*, July 25, 1868.

⁹ Brownsville *Daily Ranchero*, Dec. 16, 1868. The name “Union” is probably a reference to the Federal Union of the Mexican states, rather than a reference to the United States.

¹⁰ Schreck’s father was German-American, but his mother was Mexican. The Schreck family owned a large grocery business in Matamoros. Medrano clerked in a store in Brownsville before opening up his own shop in Matamoros

¹¹ I have tentatively identified several of the other players as Matamoros residents.

¹² The player may have been Mifflin's teenage son Thomas Mifflin Kenedy, whose mother was Hispanic.

¹³ Brownsville *Daily Ranchero*, Dec. 11, 14, 1869, Jan. 15, 18, 1870.

¹⁴ Brownsville *Daily Ranchero*, Sept. 17, 1870. While the location of the game isn't reported, later baseball games in Matamoros were played at the Garita de Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz Ferry), near the present-day Gateway International Bridge.

¹⁵ North and South Dakota. See Protoball.org.

¹⁶ See Protoball.org entries for Cuba. The 1868 date for Havana baseball is based on a 1924 newspaper interview

Lost for 200 Years—But Now Found

By John Thorn, MLB's Historian

While writing a story about my Whitman find--that his famed "sun-down perambulations" musing about baseball in the *Eagle* of July 23, 1846 was fake, most of it repeated line for line from a report in *The New-York Atlas* of June 15, 1845--I lighted upon an advertisement, not previously noted, in *The Atlas* for an upcoming ball game. My goal was to note the extent to which *The Atlas* covered baseball or cricket in the period 1840-1846.

That game was the contest between Brooklyn and New York clubs, eight to the side, played on October 21, 1845 and reported in *The Herald* the following day.

This was the only mention of baseball in the *Atlas* in the aforementioned period but its citation for the "N.Y. Ball Club" (I took note of the capitals) drove me to look for pre-1846 instances of "Ball Club" in New York City papers. Voila! I spotted the 1821 notice in the *New-York Evening Post* and instantly recognized The Retreat as the site of George Thompson's find of a ball game there in April 1823. For *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (2011) I added material about The Retreat, its proprietors before Jones, and that epochal game of baseball.

“In 2001, New York University librarian George Thompson hit the front page of the *New York Times* with his discovery of a newspaper reference to a game called baseball in New York City long before its presumed invention by the Knickerbockers. *The National Advocate* of April 25, 1823, contained this unsigned notice:

I was last Saturday much pleased in witnessing a company of active young men playing the manly and athletic game of “base ball” at the Retreat in Broadway (Jones’) [on the west side of Broadway between what now is Washington Place and Eighth Street]. I am informed they are an organized association, and that a very interesting game will be played on Saturday next at the above place, to commence at half past 3 o’clock, P.M.

Any person fond of witnessing this game may avail himself of seeing it played with consummate skill and wonderful dexterity. It is surprising, and to be regretted that the young men of our city do not engage more in this manual sport; it is innocent amusement, and healthy exercise, attended with but little expense, and has no demoralizing tendency.

COMMUNICATION.

I was last Saturday much pleased in witnessing a company of active young men playing the manly and athletic game of "base ball" at the Retreat in Broadway (Jones') : I am informed they are an organized association, and that a very interesting game will be played on Saturday next at the above place, to commence at half past 3 o'clock, P. M. Any person fond of witnessing this game may avail himself of seeing it played with consummate skill and wonderful dexterity. It is surprising, and to be regretted that the young men of our city do not engage more in this manual sport ; it is innocent amusement, and healthy exercise, attended with but little expense, and has no demoralizing tendency.

A SPECTATOR.

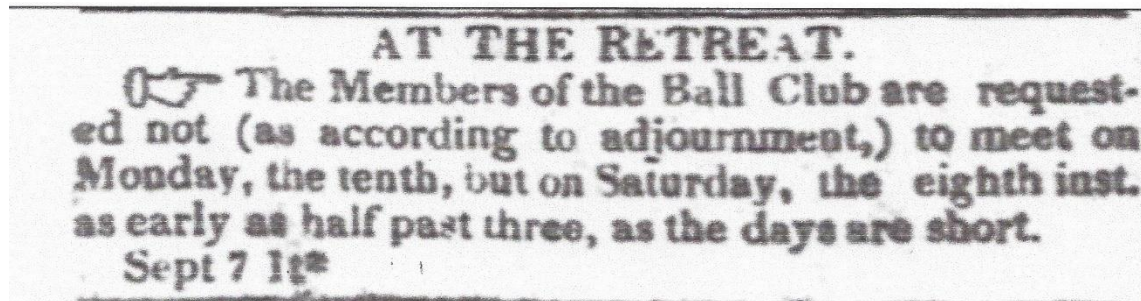
We know nothing directly of what this game looked like or how it was played, but young men who took part in it knew they needed to make excuses for playing the game of their boyhood: it was "manly and athletic," it was a "manual" sport rather than a leisurely pastime, it was "healthy"—a significant virtue after the yellow fever epidemic of the prior summer—and it was without "demoralizing tendency," by which the unnamed writer was certainly referencing the customary concatenation of blood sport, gambling, inebriation, and wenching.

[...] What to make of Jones, his retreat, and the rediscovered baseball match? At some point in mid-1822 the former William Neilson property was leased by veteran innkeeper William Jones, just in time for the sudden flush of well-to-do New Yorkers fleeing that summer's yellow fever epidemic at the foot of Manhattan Island. The fever eased with cold weather and did not return in the spring. Perhaps trying a novel idea to sustain a flagging business, Jones staged his baseball game on Saturday April 19, 1823, as mentioned in the Advocate of six days following. In that report, it was announced that another such contest

was to take place at the Retreat on Saturday, April 26. No further word of the game is to be found. By May 14, Jones gave up his lease and retreated to a more modest porterhouse, which became his home as well as his saloon. The Neilson family presumably regained control of its property at this point.

Jones may have been financially ruined in his experiment to use baseball as a draw to sell other things, such as refreshments—"ice cream, cake, punch, lemonade, &c. &c."—and maybe to link with omnibus service (the Common Council did evaluate a proposal during this fever-panic period for a line from Trinity Church to Art Street, known today as Eighth Street). However, the plan of the Jones' Retreat—interurban transit plus food and drink—would become the model for baseball's magnates later in the century."

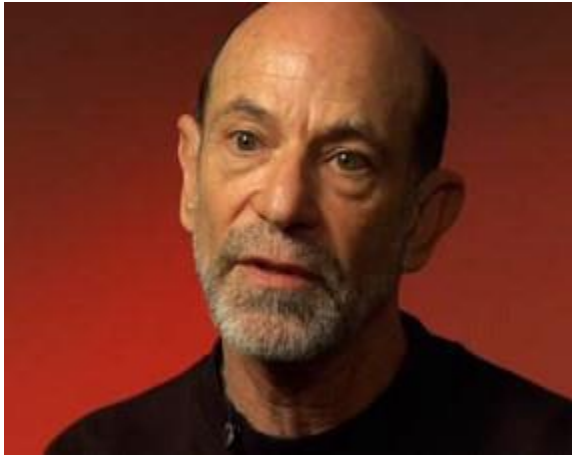
Rounding the curve: I spotted an ad including the phrase "Ball Club" in the 1821 *Evening Post*, thus creating for New York City a heretofore unsuspected bicentennial of baseball in that pioneering burgh.



David Block Makes His Notes on Early English Base Ball Available on Protoball

David Block, celebrated author of **Baseball Before We Knew It** (2007) and **Pastime Lost** (2019) has agreed to share his data -- over 500 finds, and counting -- via Protoball.org. Not that long ago, many of us saw American baseball as the brainchild of a future Civil War general in Cooperstown. That theory weakened under the strain of new research, and David's persistent digging helped reveal that an older and dimly remembered English game, commonly called, (of all things) "base ball," was a central part of the story.

David here also offers data on games played under different names -- pize-ball, tut-ball, etc. They can be browsed, and/or searched via Protoball Enhanced Search feature.



David Block

Latest Protoball Additions

Picture Section Added to Protoball. As an ongoing project, images and photos related to early baseball are being downloaded to Protoball's new "ProtoPix" feature. The image collections of MLB historian, John Thorn, will be the basis of this collection.
https://protoball.org/19C_Clipplings

Additions to Protoball for Mexico. After an exhaustive search of historic Mexican newspapers, over 40 games and clubs have recently been added to Protoball. This new research finds games and clubs pre-dating both the start of the professional baseball league in that country, along with the traditional 1882 start of amateur baseball (in Mexico City, among American-born railroad workers resident there). The data currently includes 29 different clubs, and 12 ballgames, stretching across the length and breadth of the U.S.'s southern neighbor. The article in this newsletter on the first baseball game in Mexico is part of this new research.
<https://protoball.org/Mexico>

Predecessor and Derivative Games. Protoball now contains a compilation of 299 games with a resemblance to baseball.

Those attempting to learn about the origins of baseball confront a large zoo of different games that are candidates as modern baseball's predecessors. Even more complicated is the array of names for those games as they evolved over the years; some games appear to have sported different names, depending on the region and the era of play; and some names – including “baseball” -- have been used for rather different games over the years.

The collection has been extended to embrace games that seem to have been spawned by baseball itself -- derivative games.

This glossary is intended to provide a focus for our learning, as a group of researchers, about the full range of “safe-haven” games and their names. https://protoball.org/Glossary_of_Games

New Protoball 19th Century Clippings Database. This extensive data base includes over 9000 selected clippings from Nineteenth Century news sources. Systematic searches can now be performed on Protoball's "Enhanced Search" page.

The heart of this data base was contributed in early 2020 by Richard Hershberger, as a very happy side-product of his years-long march through 1800s news sources (he's now up to the year 1890). In his systematic search for items that reveal something about the early evolution of baseball, Richard's long trek has so far produced several published papers, and write-ups found on the "Original Analytics" collections on protoball.org. https://protoball.org/19C_Clippings

Newspaper article for baseball in New Zealand. New Zealand, that isolated island nation in the South Pacific, might seem an unlikely place for the early spread of baseball. But it was. Baseball was played here as early as 1881. Historian David Block recently uploaded an article from the Wellington Evening Post, Nov. 8, 1888, detailing the first baseball match game played in Wellington, New Zealand's capital city. This game was played Nov. 11th at Newtown Park, a rugby venue, between a traveling American “Negro” minstrel troupe, and a picked team of ballplayers from Wellington. See https://protoball.org/Wellington_Base_Ball_Club_v_Hicks-Sawyer_Minstrel_Co._on_10_November_1888

Arrangements have been definitely made for the base-ball match to be played at Newtown Park at 2.30 on Saturday afternoon between the nine of the Hicks-Sawyer Baseball Club—which is a regularly organised club—and a team to be chosen from the Wellington Baseball Club. At the suggestion of Mr. Speed, manager of the minstrel players, it has been decided to make collections at the gates and hand over the proceeds to the Benevolent Institution. Our musical visitors have amongst them several specially expert baseballers, and before leaving San Francisco for the colonies they played a match against the crack club of that city. The opportunity of seeing the American game played by skilled men for the first time in the colony, and at the same time benefitting a deserving charitable institution, should insure a large attendance of spectators. The Wellington team will be chosen from the following — Henderson (captain), Mills, Scott, Lawrance, Moorhouse, Chegwidden, Kiasell, Hubble, Dixon, Chuck, Gibson, Palmer, M'Intyre, Armstrong, Crichton, Webb, Weston, and Liddle. The following will be the Hicks-Sawyer players in the order of batting, with their positions in the field:— John Connor, catcher; Irvine Sayles, pitcher; Dick Johnson, short stop; Billy Speed (captain), 1st base; Jack Evans, 2nd base; George Connors, 3rd base; Edward Connors, left field; Wm. Downs, centre field; H. Easton, right field; emergencies, Washington and Copeland.

Find of the Month

With the onset of Black History Month, and the recent announcements on Negro League Baseball, it is especially timely to reveal for recent findings on African-American, and interracial, baseball. Recently a new candidate for **FIRST Black-White interracial baseball match game** was discovered. The Cadiz (Ohio) *Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1867 reports on “a match game of base ball, ... played lately between the colored Republicans of Cadiz, and the Young America club, composed of young white boys, aged from twelve to sixteen...” See https://protoball.org/First_Black-White_Interracial_Match_Game

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A match game of base ball was play-
ed lately between the *colored* Republicans
of Cadiz, and the Young America club,
composed of young white boys, aged from
twelve to sixteen, with the following re-
sult:

YOUNG AMERICA.	O. R.	UNION.	O. R.
Laizure, c.....	5	7 McGinis, c.....	2 6
Knox, p.....	3	8 Miller, p.....	2 6
Brown, s. s.....	5	7 Jackson, s. s.....	1 6
McFadden, 1 b...	4	9 Johnson, W. 1 b	3 6
McMath, 2 b.....	1	10 Swain, 2 b.....	4 3
Means, 3 b.....	3	9 Johnson, L. 3 b.	2 5
Hunter, l. f.....	1	10 Wilson, l. f.....	1 6
Howard, c. f.....	4	7 Ramoy, c. f.....	7 1
Walker, r. f.....	1	9 Smith, r. f.....	5 2
	76		41

INNINGS.

CLUBS.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	TOT'L
Y. America	0	13	6	0	2	4	8	36	7	76
Union,	6	9	2	6	5	2	6	2	3	41

UMPIRE—Mr. J. B. ROWLES, Slemmons
B. B. Club.
SCORERS—Messrs. H. T. Price and R. P.
Scott.
TIME OF GAME—3:55.
FLY CATCHES—Young America, 5. Un-
ion, 13.
OUT ON FOULS—Young America, 12.—
Union, 9.
OUT ON BASES—Young America, 8. Un-
ion, 8.

The Protoball website also contains entries for all known African-American baseball clubs formed prior to 1871.

Research Requests

Protoball is seeking information on:

Contemporary evidence of baseball in Upton, MA in the 1700s.

Was the Double -Eight style of baseball cover invented in the United States?

The origins of the Hungarian game of Longa Meta.

For more details, visit https://protoball.org/Most_Wanted_Research



BULLETIN BOARD

Richard Hershberger just had an article published in the Fall 2020 *Baseball Research Journal* on “The First Baseball War: The American Association and the National League”

The Spring 2020 *Baseball Research Journal* contained an article by Terry Bohn on early Dakota baseball, titled “Considerable Excitement and Heavy Betting: The Origins of Baseball in the Dakota Territory.” The same issue contained an analysis of early baseball and its statistical record, “Baseball 1858-1865: By the Numbers” by Bruce Allardice.

The Vintage Base Ball Association is holding an online convention April 17, 2021, which will include several presentations on baseball during the 1850s and 1860s.

On March 1, 2021, the Kenosha Civil War Museum will interview Bruce Allardice on “Coffee and Hardtack Baseball” (Baseball During the Civil War Era), 3 p.m. CST. Zoom Meeting ID: 870 8449 0922



Illustration in the “*Cantigas de Santa Maria*,” dated around 1280, for song/poem 42.2, showing a bat-ball game in Spain