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◆ JUNE 19, 1991 ◆

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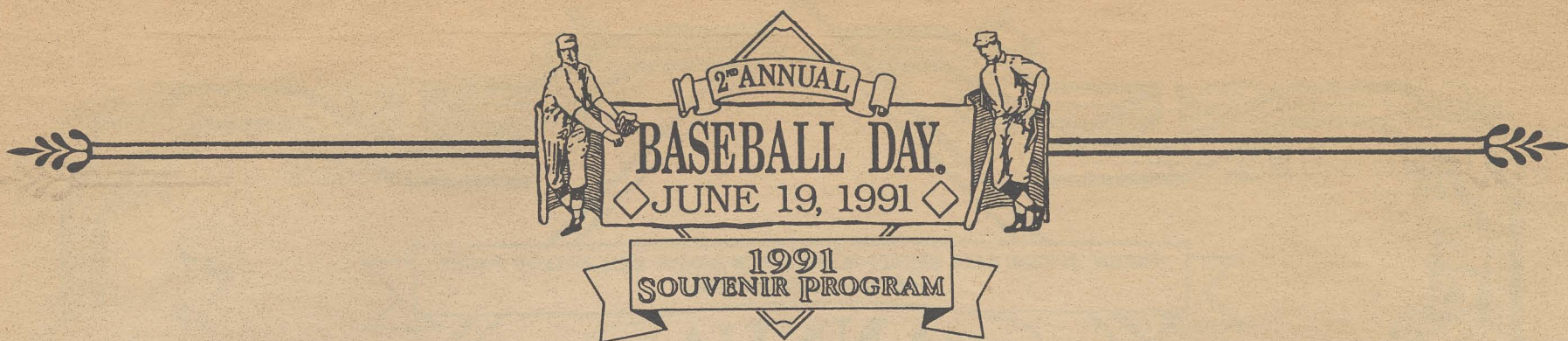
1991
SOUVENIR PROGRAM



A publication of the Hudson Reporter

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Hoboken: The birthplace of baseball

An historic event will occur this Wednesday, June 19, during the Second Annual Baseball Day celebrations in Hoboken, when the invading Cooperstown Leatherstocking's take on the Hoboken Knickerbocker's in two fully authentic recreations of early 19th century "base ball".

This will be the first time in more than 130 years that local residents will be treated to the privilege of seeing "town ball" (a precursor of modern baseball) and Knickerbocker Base Ball (i.e., modern baseball circa 1846) played on the Elysian Fields of Hoboken — and the first time these two rival cities will have a chance to meet on the field of competition.

The Cooperstown team will be led by Tom Heitz, who is a recognized authority on 19th century baseball and the head librarian at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

According to Stephen Speiser, President of the American Baseball Heritage, organizer of the event, "Tom Heitz and I agreed that modern baseball needs to rediscover its roots. Money and ego have replaced the game as the dominant feature of the sport. This event will be a much needed reminder of how the game was originally meant to be played. These early teams prided themselves as "amateurs" in the noblest sense of the word; which is an ideal that got lost somewhere along the way."

In an attempt to help focus public attention on the fact that there is an historical record which is both well

documented and which traces the modern game back to the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club and to Elysian Fields in Hoboken, both teams will cross the Hudson River in an authentic recreation ferry ride from the Battery Park City ferry landing to Hoboken. Both teams

"Modern baseball needs to rediscover its roots. Money and ego have replaced the game as the dominant feature of the sport."

Stephen Speiser, president of the American Baseball Heritage.

will be dressed in period clothing to help lend an air of authenticity to the day's events. The teams will arrive at the ferry landing at 8 a.m. and will depart for the 10 minute sail at 8:30.

The trip from Manhattan to Hoboken acknowledges the fact that these early teams were made up of New Yorker's who were obliged to seek the green playing fields of Hoboken because the steady march of development had swallowed up all of the available playing sites in lower Manhattan. When Alexander Cartwright organized the Knickerbockers in September of 1845 to

play a radical variation of town ball which introduced for the first time, the modern baseball diamond and what remains to this day the essential rules of modern baseball, they chose Elysian Fields as their sole and exclusive playing field.

Also attending this year's event will be Alexander Cartwright the 4th, who is flying in from Seattle to help promote national awareness of the fact that it was his great-great-grandfather (not Abner Doubleday) who is responsible for the modern game, and who was among the very first to be inducted to the Hall of Fame in 1938, where there is a plaque attesting to his standing as "the Father of Modern Baseball."

With featured sponsorship by New Jersey Bell Yellow Pages and the hot radio station, WHTZ-FM (Z-100), the day's activities also include a parade at 5:30 p.m. up Washington Street from City Hall to Sixth and across to the Stevens Institute campus, a street festival beginning at 6:15 p.m. at the lower parking lot at Sixth and River Terrace, and a fireworks display after dark.

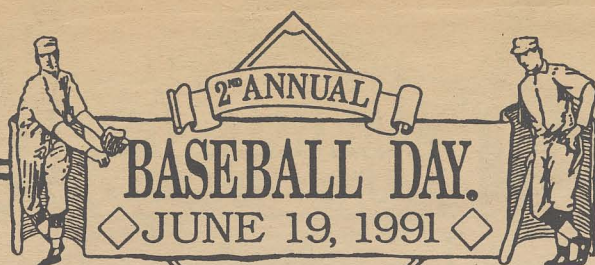
The actual recreation games will take place at the ball field at the Stevens Institute of Technology soon after 7 p.m., following a benefit softball game involving the "Z-100 All-Stars" and the Hoboken Red Wings. During the games, concessionaires will be open with all manner of souvenirs and food beverage items available. In addition, the Hoboken Little League will be playing an "All-Star" game at the Stevens Park. Bring blankets and chairs!

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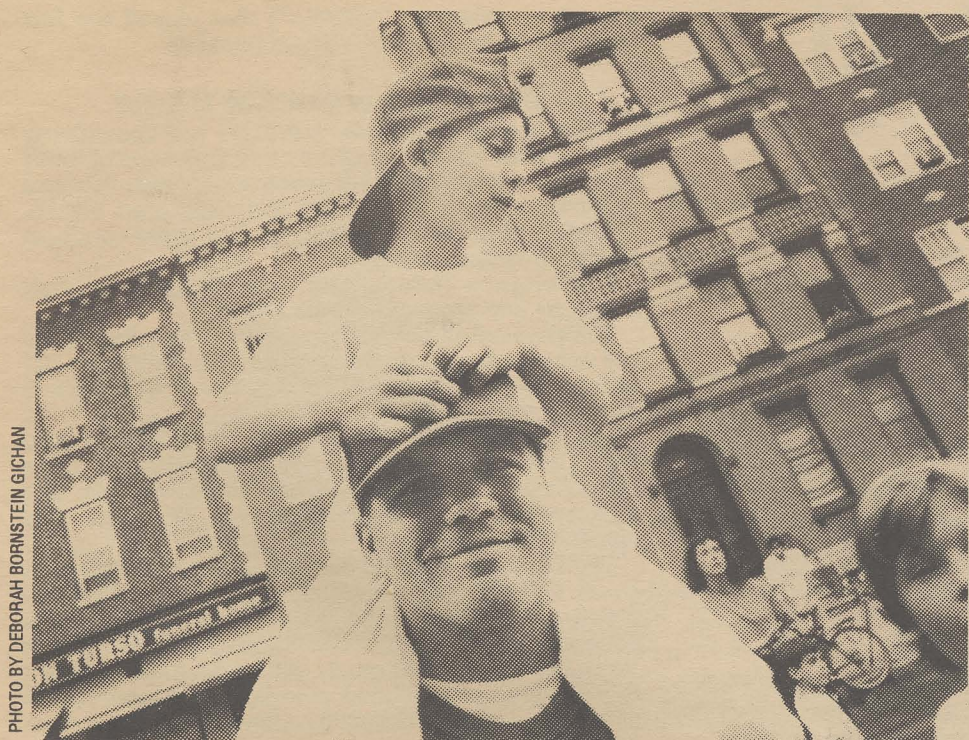


PHOTO BY DEBORAH BORNSTEIN GICHAN

"Wolfe" Fitzgibbons and his son take part in Hoboken's Baseball Day Parade, 1990.

Second Annual Baseball Day Wednesday, June 19 Activities

- 8 a.m.** Recreation Ferry Ride by Cooperstown Leatherstockings and Hoboken Knickerbockers in authentic mid-19th century clothing from the Battery Park City ferry landing (North End Avenue & Vesey Street) to Hoboken.
- 8:45 a.m.** Recreation Walk by Leatherstockings and Knickerbockers up Hudson River (River Street) to Elysian Fields.
- 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.** Recreation Town Ball Game practice match between the Leatherstockings and the Knickerbockers at the Stevens Institute of Technology ball field.
- 5:30 p.m.** Parade from City Hall (Newark Street) up Washington Street to Sixth Street, then East to Stevens Institute of Technology. Parade Marshals — Danny Ortiz (Hoboken High Red Wings) and John "Honey" Romano (Hoboken's first American League All-Star.)
- 6:15 p.m. to Midnight** Street Festival begins at the Stevens Institute lower parking lot (Sixth and River Terrace) with concessionaires for all manner of souvenirs and food (Good Humor to introduce a new baseball ice cream cone), a six piece Dixieland Band, and other performers.
- 6:20 p.m.** Opening Ceremonies at the Stevens Institute of Technology baseball field. Hoboken High School Band — National Anthem; Welcome by Mayor Patrick Pasculli; Open Remarks by Stephen E. Speiser, President of the American Baseball Heritage; Recognition of Honored Guests; Musical Interlude by Peter Isling; Musical Interlude by Jim Reardon "Baseball Was Born in This Town;" Special Guest Appearances: Bobby Brown (N.Y. Yankees, '80-'81); Jerry Mumphy (N.Y. Yankees '81-'83); Alex Cartwright IV.
- 6:30 p.m.** Cooperstown Leatherstockings v Hoboken Knickerbockers in fully authentic recreation of 19th century "town ball" game, a precursor of modern baseball.
- 7:15 p.m.** Cooperstown Leatherstockings v Hoboken Knickerbockers in fully authentic recreation of Knickerbocker Base Ball circa 1846 in honor of first match game played at Elysian Fields on June 19, 1846.
- 7:30 p.m.** Hoboken Little League exhibition game at Steven's Park (5th Street ball field.)
- 8:00 p.m.** Soviet Olympic Baseball Team v New Jersey Royals at Steven's ball field.
- 8:30 p.m.** Z-100 Flame Throwers v Hoboken High Red Wings to play an exhibition softball match at the Stevens baseball field.
- 9:30 p.m.** Baseball Memorabilia Raffle of autographed collectibles donated by S.F. Giants, Texas Rangers, Montreal Expos, Cleveland Indians, L.A. Dodgers and more.
- 9:45 p.m.** Fireworks Display presented by Girone Fireworks Company at Hoboken's Fifth Street piers with best views from Street Festival area (Stevens Sixth Street parking lot.)

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& Ketchup
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The origins of baseball

By Stephen E. Spelser

On June 19, 1846, at Elysian Fields, a peaceful meadow nestled beside the banks of the Hudson River in the summer resort town of Hoboken, New Jersey — a place described in one account as "one of the most picturesque and delightful places imaginable", two teams met to play a new and radical form of various bat-and-ball games that were popular at the time and, there, gave birth to America's national pastime.

Games involving balls and sticks were, of course, played long before 1846. Historical records indicate that some form of ball playing existed as early as ancient China, Egypt and Greece.

During the 14th century, a game known as "stoolball" was popular among children in England. A ball would be thrown at an upturned, three legged, milking stool which the batter had to "defend" with a stick in his hand. Whoever scored the most hits before the ball struck the stool was the winner.

Primitive stick and ball games also flourished in urban and rural America throughout the 18th and early 19th century. These games were known variously as Rounders, One-Old Cat, Two-Old-Cat, Three-Old-Cat, Stool Ball, Tap Ball, town ball, and sometimes even "Base Ball."

Nevertheless, while the name "base ball" has been traced back to 1744 in England and 1778 in the United States, the myriad games played under that label possessed only a superficial resemblance to the modern game.

These earlier namesakes, for the most part, possessed no fixed rules, no set playing field, no fixed number of players or fielding positions, and were essentially children's games played under local rules and customs without formal organization. The result was a variety of games which came to be identified by their geographic locale: "Pennsylvania town ball", "Massachusetts town ball," the "New England Game" and the like. None of these games, however, were played on a baseball diamond or under contemporary rules of play.

To say, therefore, that these crude games were "baseball" or that "baseball" (as we understand the game today) existed prior to 1846, would be a gross distortion of fact and of the fundamental contributions made by the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club and by Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr. — the real father of modern baseball.

By the 1840's, in lower Manhattan, there were several groups of young men who met regularly to play a variety

of early bat-and-ball games under rules which were developed through experience and sometimes modified on the spot.

One such young man — Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr., approached his friends at their regular playing site

"When we saw what a great game Cartwright had given us ... we set about to organize a club." Duncan Curry, first president of the Knickerbocker Club.

in the spring of 1845, with some plans drawn on a piece of paper. As Duncan Curry, the first President of the Knickerbocker Club recalled thirty-two years later:

"He had laid out a diamond-shaped field, with canvas bags filled with sand or sawdust for bases at three of the points and an iron plate for home base. He had arranged for a catcher, a pitcher, three basemen, a short fielder and three outfielders. His plan met with much good natured derision, but he was so persistent in having us try his new game that we finally consented more to humor him than with any thought of it becoming a reality.

"At that time, none of us had any experience in that style of play and there were no rules for playing the game. We had to do the best we could under the circumstances, aided by Cartwright's judgment...When we saw what a great game Cartwright had given us, and as his suggestion for forming a club to play it met with our approval, we set about to organize a club."

These new rules of play were discussed and tested throughout the spring and summer and, in September 1845, the first organized baseball club — the Knickerbocker's — was formed. They selected Elysian Fields as their sole and exclusive playing field (and remained there for the term of the club's 40-year existence).

On a hot, sunny day, on June 19, 1846, the Knickerbocker's met another group of players known loosely as the New York Club at Elysian Fields (which, according to Greek mythology — and appropriately

enough — refers to "paradise") and played the first recorded match game of modern baseball.

The Knickerbocker Game

While Cartwright's new game did not immediately replace town ball and all of the other variations of "base ball" then being played, his revolutionary new field and other innovations so excited and captivated the imagination of sporting enthusiasts that it did condemn them to eventual extinction.

Cartwright's innovations were elegant in their simplicity and profound in their effect.

The physical shape of Cartwright's baseball diamond still dictates the fundamental strategies which are applicable to the game; and, it is this that gives the game its heart and soul.

For example, by setting the bases at a distance of 90 feet, Cartwright's design forces a repetition of close plays at the bases. This, in turn, forced the rise and development of the art of short stop, first base, and lightening fast relay plays.

The baseball diamond also meant that base runners could, for the first time, run the bases in a circle thereby greatly increasing both the speed of the runners and the pace of play. The short, "U"-shaped square used in "town ball" made it extremely difficult for runners to turn the corners, and dictated a radically different set of strategies and considerations. Consequently, the pace and nature of these games were fundamentally different from baseball.

Furthermore, Cartwright's concept of a playing field of fixed dimensions with uniform rules of play constituted a conscious effort on his part to provide the game with the structure necessary to allow teams from all over to compete on equal terms. Without this development the rapid growth of organized baseball would not have been possible.

Cartwright's rules also eliminated a practice known as "plugging" or "soaking" the runner (i.e., throwing the ball at the runner) to gain on out, which, until that time, was the dominant feature of town ball and all of the other variations baseball then being played. This single rule change had a profound effect on the very nature of the game — it redirected the entire focus of the game from the runners to the bases. Whereas before, infielders could play wherever they chose, they were now forced to set themselves at the bases. This change also gave rise to the need for a new infield position — that of a "short fielder" (now known as short stop). It further increased the importance of tightened and rapid fielding plays; eliminated a crude and sophomoric element and thereby allowed the game to become more rational. Finally, it created the need

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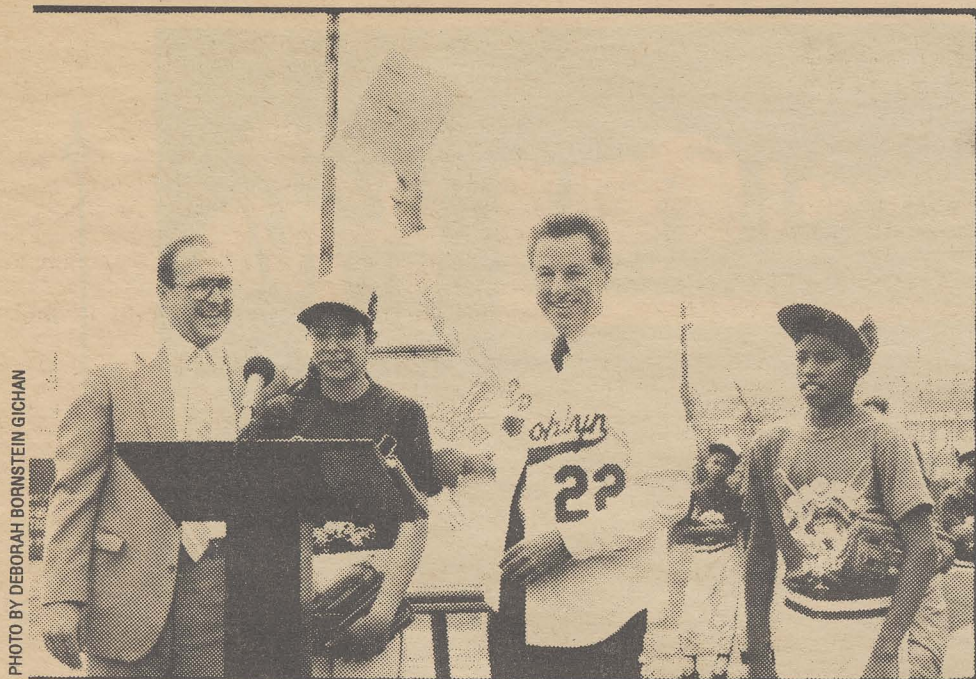


PHOTO BY DEBORAH BORNSTEIN GICHAN

Governor Florio holds proclamation declaring Hoboken the birthplace of baseball at Baseball Day 1990. Pictured, left to right, are Mayor Pat Pasculli, Angella Zampella, Gov. Florio, Raphael Rincon and members of the Little League All Stars.

The Name of the Game

Baseball jargon is as old as the sport itself. Here are some terms and definitions from the game's early days; most are no longer in use. The cartoons are from William Crane's *A Comprehensive View of Baseball*, 1859, and the *New York Graphic*, 1874.

Aces: Runs.

Ash: A bat, since bats are usually made from white ash.

Blinder: A shutout.

Bounder: A bouncing ball that does not go out of the infield.

Burning, plugging, plunking or soaking: Putting a player out by hitting him with the ball.

Chicago or skunk: To shut out an opponent.

Cranks: Baseball fans.

Daisy cutter: A sharply hit ground ball.

Fair-foul hit: A hit that falls in fair territory, then bounces foul between home and the base (playable until 1877).

Feeder: The pitcher in rounders.

First nine: The best players on an amateur ballclub. Some clubs also had second, third and muffin nines.

Foul bound: A foul ball caught after one bounce for an out.



An "eye-deal" decision.

continued from previous page

for umpires, team organization and overall strategy.

It's not difficult to imagine the seemingly infantile "free-for-alls" that must have ensued in games such as "town ball" with base runners wildly dodging "stingers", as in the childhood game of "Dodge Ball." Another Cartwright rule change, that of preventing runners from interfering with fielding plays had a similar effect.

Prior to Cartwright, each team would continue at bat in each inning until all players were out — as in cricket. By limiting each team to three outs per inning, and by requiring all players to bat in fixed rotation announced before the game, Cartwright dramatically increased the pace and further molded the strategies applicable to the game.

In sum, it is a testament to Cartwright's conception of the game that baseball has remained fundamentally unchanged to this day; and it is the qualities with which he has imbued the sport that has propelled it to the status of America's national pastime, and captured the imagination of a nation. When the call to "play ball" is heard, it is Cartwright's magic touch that we feel.

Massachusetts Town Ball

In 1858, some ball players from Massachusetts adopted 21 rules and regulations for the game of town ball as they played it, which became known as the Massachusetts Game 197 the variant that will be recreated and played at the Second Annual Baseball Day celebrations this year.

Instead of bases, wooden stakes projecting about four feet out of the ground are placed at the corners of a square, 60 feet apart. The Striker (bat-

ter) was placed midway between the first and fourth stakes in a four-foot-square box. The Thrower (pitcher) delivers the ball overhand from a line near the center of the square, thirty-five feet from the Striker.

In the Massachusetts Game, sides change after each out. Outs could be made by striking out (missing three deliveries with the catcher receiving each missed pitch on the fly while remaining on his feet), by "plugging" the runner (hitting him with the ball), or by catching a batted ball on the fly.

One of the most striking differences between the Massachusetts Game and the Knickerbocker Game is the treatment of base runners. In town ball, runners are not obligated to take a direct path between the bases and may run erratically to avoid being plugged. However, stealing bases is not permitted and the runners do not leave their stakes until the bat touches the ball. Further, runners are allowed to run to a stake out of sequence to avoid a plug, but he must then re-touch all four stakes in rotation if he is to score a tally (run).

Unlike the Knickerbocker Game, the Massachusetts version has no foul lines. Everything is in play that touches the bat. What we think of as a foul tip is playable. Strikers were even allowed (and often did) reverse their grip and intentionally hit the ball behind them.

Although the Massachusetts Game evolved after the Knickerbocker Game, it was closer to the primitive versions of ball being played in the early 1800's than to the Knickerbocker Game to which we trace our modern game. Massachusetts Town Ball is being recreated this Baseball Day because it provides a stark contrast to the revolutionary changes introduced by the Knickerbocker Club at Elysian Fields — the birthplace of modern baseball.



BERNARD F. KENNY, JR.

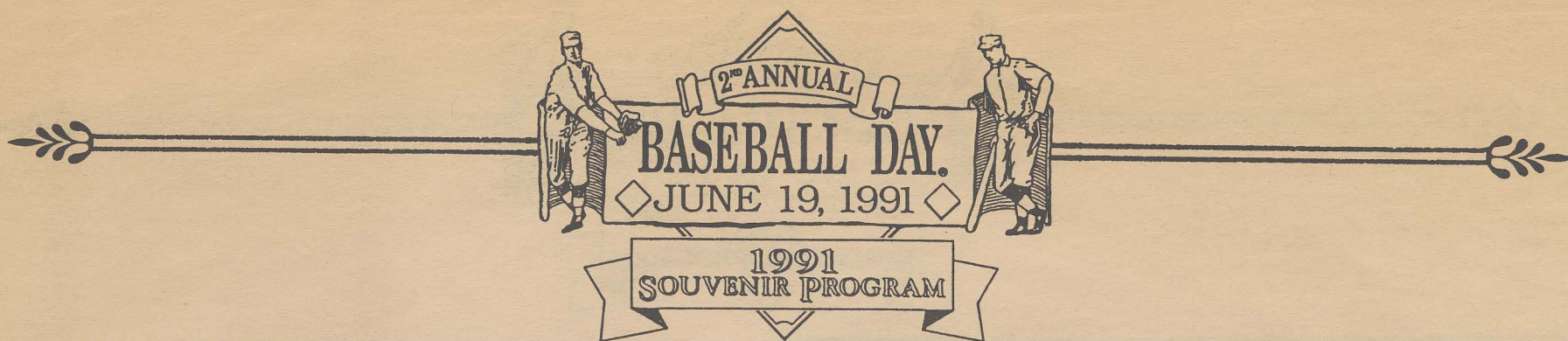
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Elysian Fields — *Why this particular meadow?*

From its inception in September 1845, the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York designated Elysian Fields as their home field, and played here every Monday and Thursday afternoon for the term of the Club's forty year existence.

So it came to pass that Elysian Fields stood witness to the first "Golden Era" of modern baseball. For it was here, on "the fields of paradise," that cricket and other ball players became converts to the new game.

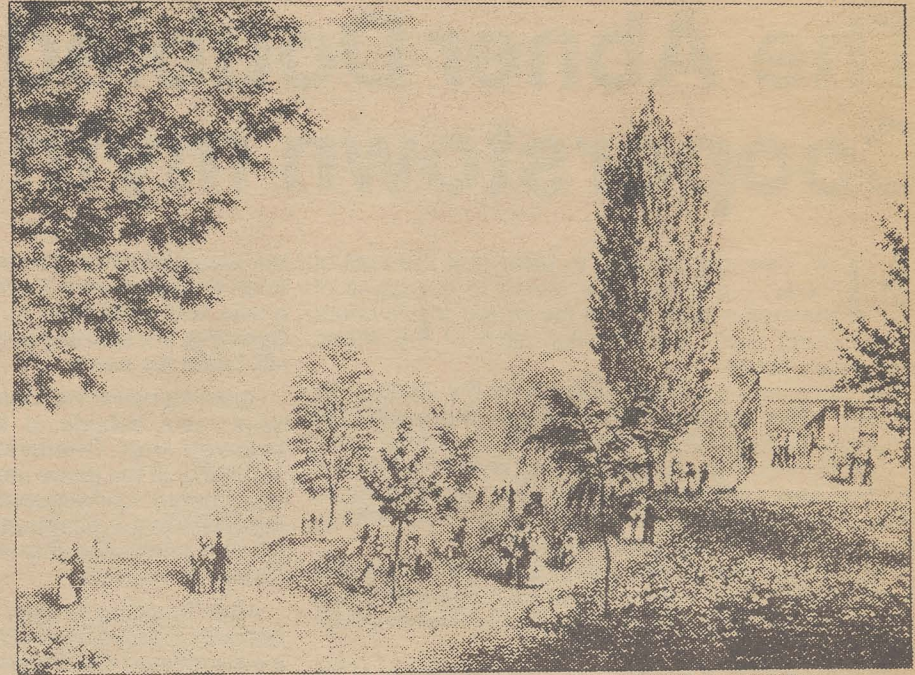
The Knickerbocker Club became the model upon which all of the other early clubs organized, and their rules became

the standard. So dominant was the Knickerbocker Club during the 1840's and 1850's, that they helped to organize many of the early baseball clubs of this period and transformed Elysian Fields into the first great center of baseball activity in the United States.

In the fall of 1847, Henry Chadwick — "The Dean of Baseball Writers" and one of the preeminent figures from the world of 19th century baseball — was first converted to the game when he saw and then played his first game with the original Knickerbocker team.

An event which was typical of this period was that of the Excelsiors — the

The Elysian Fields, Hoboken, 1831

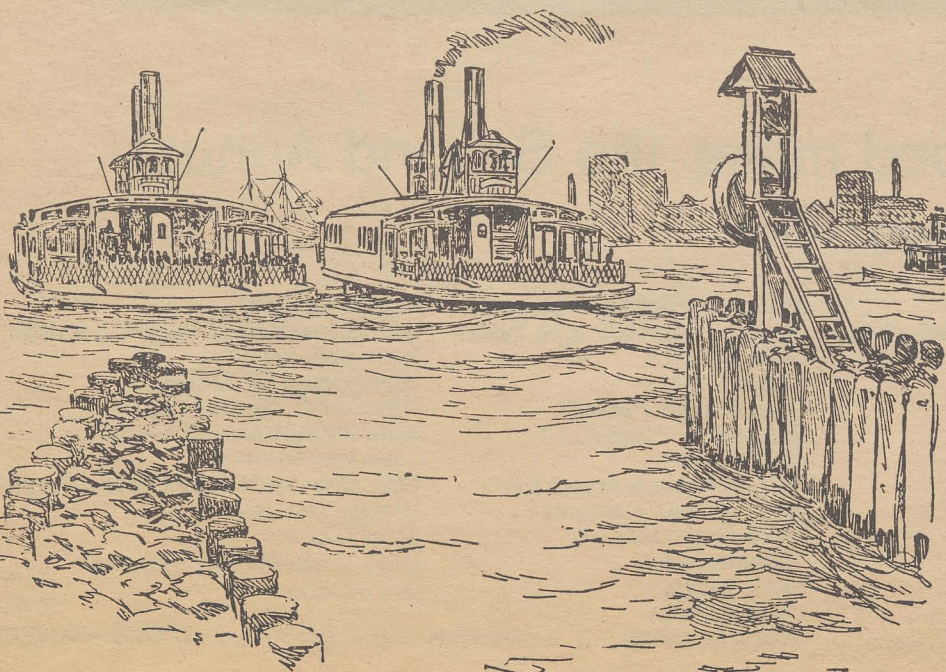


ENGRAVING COURTESY HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Scene at River Walk below Castle Point, Hoboken



PHOTO REPRODUCTION COURTESY HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM



Hoboken Ferryboats arriving at Hoboken

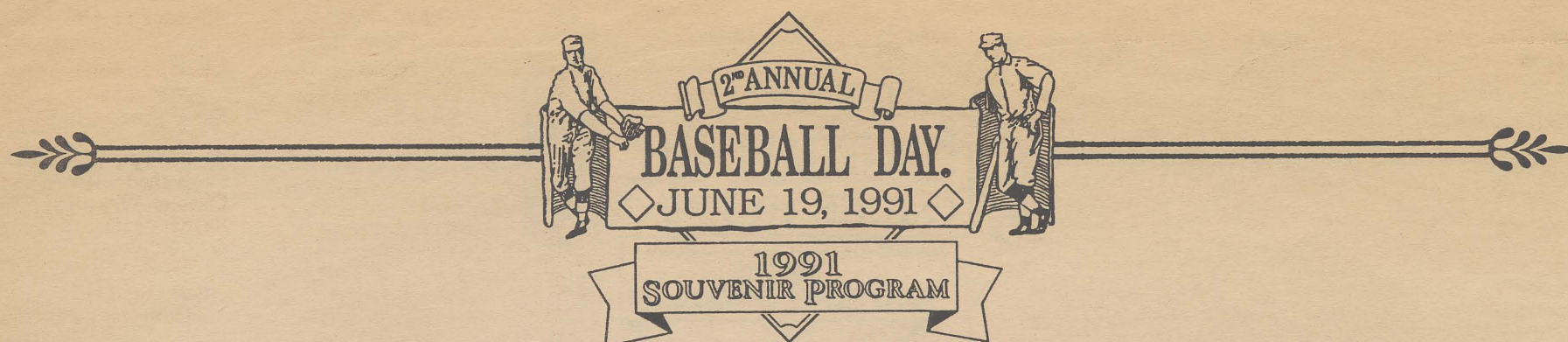
first team based in Brooklyn to play under Knickerbocker rules and one of the most influential clubs of the era. Like other clubs of its day, it occurred to several of their founding members to "get up" a club of their own (in November of 1854) after observing a match game between the Knickerbockers and another team (the Eagles.)

By 1859, eight of the original members of the National Association of Base Ball Players (the first baseball organization in the U.S.; and a forerunner of the National League) were playing regularly at Elysian Fields: the Mutuels and the Washingtons played on Mondays and Thursdays along with the Knickerbockers; the Gothams and the Eagles played Tuesdays and Fridays; and, the Empires, the St. Nicholas Club, and the Hobokens played every Wednesday and Saturday. By modern standards, this

level of baseball activity would be the equivalent of having an entire Division of the National League playing at one baseball field.

While the formation of the National Association in 1858 finally ended the Knickerbocker's dominance over the sport, Elysian Fields continued as the favored rendezvous of baseball players. It reached its zenith on August 3, 1865, when, before a crowd of 15,000-20,000 spectators, the mighty Athletics of Brooklyn met the Mutuels in "the first grand match for the championship of the United States."

In sum, by every relevant standard, Elysian Fields is truly the Birthplace of Modern Baseball — a legacy of Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr. and the Knickerbocker Baseball Club of New York.



The Abner Doubleday/Cooperstown myth

How, then did it come to pass that the Hall of Fame — our nation's shrine to the game of baseball — was built in the wrong city, in honor of the wrong man, and in celebration of the wrong anniversary date?

The story begins just after the turn of the century. By the year 1903, baseball had achieved unprecedented popularity throughout the United States. Those lucky enough were able to witness the First World Series, and baseball fans (referred to as "cranks" even in those days) were demanding to know more about where, when and how the game first originated.

It was in that year that an article appeared in *Baseball Guide* entitled *The Origin of Base Ball*. The article was written by the editor of the magazine — Henry Chadwick.

Though Chadwick's article did trace the history of the game back to the Elysian Fields and the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, his account differed from other of the day in that he claimed that the game was an adaptation of the English game of Rounders.

Chadwick was born in England in 1824 and played cricket and rounders as a schoolboy. In later years, he wrote books dealing with the rules of both games. After witnessing the Knickerbockers play a "scrub" match at Elysian Fields in 1848, however, he became a devoted follower of baseball.

So taken was he with the game that he became baseball's first reporter. Later, he suggested a number of rule changes that were adopted, and also invented the box scoring system still in use today.

As he was widely recognized as an authority on the subject, his account drew a fair amount of attention. Still,

the Doubleday/Cooperstown myth would never have been invented were it not for the fact that Chadwick's article was published in a magazine owned by A.G. Spalding, the sporting goods magnate whose company still bears his name.

Spalding hated the idea that his beloved game might have roots outside of the United States, and also believed that Chadwick's article might hurt the popularity of the game (not to mention sales of baseball equipment.) Consequently, he decided to challenge Chadwick in a subsequent article in which he expressed his firm conviction that the game was completely an American invention.

After Spalding's reply, the issue erupted into a full-fledged controversy which continued to rage until Spalding suggested the creation of a blue ribbon committee to investigate the origins of the game. In early 1907, a seven man commission comprised of prominent sports figures and retired ball players was formed. The Commission was headed-up by a former president of the National League, A.G. Mills — a close associate of Spalding's.

While all of the Commissioners accepted the honor, it appears that none of them were willing to do any work. Years passed without progress. Finally, under intense pressure from Spalding and the press, Mills, acting alone, prepared and submitted a report in the name of the Commission in which he concluded that Civil War general and national hero, Abner Doubleday, "invented" the game in 1839 when he was a boy in Cooperstown, NY — six years before Alexander Cartwright was credited with having done the same.

The report was a shockingly inadequate piece of work that failed to withstand scrutiny. In fact, there is no disagreement among baseball historians that the Mills report is complete fiction. Why he did what he did is unknown; however, historians have speculated that he was acting on orders from Spalding to "find" that baseball was purely an American invention, and chose Doubleday — a life long friend (who had died prior to the turn of the century) — as his vehicle.

The controversy subsided and the report probably would have remained nothing more than a curious footnote to the history of baseball were it not for the efforts of Stephen Clark, a Cooperstown entrepreneur who recognized a good business opportunity when he saw one. He knew that the Mills report represented a wonderful opportunity to boost tourism and commerce in the remote and sleepy village — provided, he could convince the denizens of baseball to build the "National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum" there.

Clark "pitched" his idea to those in power. The year was 1935, the height of the Depression, and his scheme was just the kind of shot-in-the-arm that baseball, and the country, could use. The timing was perfect — honors could be bestowed "posthumously" upon Doubleday during a season-long celebration which could be planned for baseball's "centennial" in 1939.

Then Baseball Commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, knew that the "Doubleday/Cooperstown" story was pure fiction and even received a letter with supporting documentation from Cartwright's grandson. Regrettably, Commissioner Landis chose to join the conspiracy to rewrite history. The concept of a "centennial celebration" and the good press and financial gain it represented was simply too tempting to resist.

Ironically, and in a cruel twist of fate, Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr., had a "Day" named in his honor during the 1939 "centennial celebrations" — a celebration designed to bestow national honor and recognition upon Abner Doubleday, his unwitting usurper; to deprive Cartwright of his rightful place in history; and, which effectively served to wipe his name from the public's eye — until today.



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