

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Baseball"

Carroll County Times article for 15 August 1993

By Joe Getty

Following the Civil War, the sport of baseball became increasingly popular in Carroll County. Large groups of spectators would gather at the local ballfields to watch their friends and neighbors take on the baseball clubs from nearby communities. The games not only provided entertainment but also competitive outlets for rivalries between Carroll County's towns and villages.

Short entries in the "Local Items" column of community newspapers reported on the clubs and their games. An early reference to a Westminster team appeared in the American Sentinel of April 4, 1867:

"The Base Ball Season - With the advent of Spring and dry ground, the Base Ball Clubs seem to be re-organizing. The 'Olympian' last Monday selected as officers the following gentlemen: President, Capt. L. F. Byers; Vice-President, Hugo E. Fiddis; Secretary, S. D. Webster; Treasurer, Lewis Reese. Mr. D. H. Zepp was appointed chairman of the Business Committee."

From an article during the same year, we learn that the prowess of the local clubs was limited when up against teams from larger communities: "On Monday afternoon a match game of Base Ball was played at the West End of Town, between the 'Excelsior Club' of Frederick City, and the 'Patapsco' of this place, resulting in the triumph of the 'Excelsiors.' The occasion drew together a large attendance, and we learn was for a while very hotly contested, but the long practice and physical superiority of the members of the Excelsior in the end proved too much for their adversaries." (American Sentinel, June 13, 1867)

Through the late 19th century, communities from throughout Carroll County fielded baseball teams. In some cases, the teams would gather informally to play against another town, such as the team described in this excerpt from 1895: "A 'picked nine' from Westminster went to Union Bridge to play the club of that town last Saturday, and they 'played' sure enough, as the score showed they were blanked in every inning, while the home club piled up twelve runs." (Democratic Advocate, May 14, 1895) Other teams were formally organized and advertised their availability to schedule games: "Frizzellburg Items - The base ball team of this place has been reorganized with a membership of thirteen with John E. Null manager. The club is ready for engagements with other country clubs." (Democratic Advocate, May 14, 1895)

The 1895 Democratic Advocate carried a baseball column every week in the spring editions. In addition to club teams at Western Maryland College and New Windsor College, the teams from the following communities are mentioned in this column: Carrollton, Finksburg, Frizzellburg, Manchester, New Windsor, Reese, Union Bridge and Wesley. Westminster had two teams: the Westminster Base Ball Club and the Westminster Stars.

Many rivalries developed between local Carroll County teams. Sometimes the rivalries extended off the field, as proven by these two reports about the same game played between Reese and Wesley:

"Base Ball - On Saturday last two nines from Reese P. O. played ball with the 1st and 2d nines of Wesley, carrying off both games. In the absence of Zepp, the Reese boys' pitcher, J. Mitten, of Westminster, pitched in his stead, the Wesleys making but seven hits off his delivery, while Croft, the Wesley pitcher,

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

was batted out of the box, being hit thirteen times, with a total of 18 bases, in three innings at the end of which the game was called, the Wesleys having had enough of the Reese boys' slugging. The score was 14 to 10, the ragged fielding of the Reese boys giving them most of the runs. The Wesley umpire being an amateur in the business was unable to see any ball Mitten pitched across the plate, and calling them all balls. The Wesley rooters also used their mouths manfully for the home team, the noise being so great at times that the umpire's decision could not be heard. Two base hits - H. Wareheim, C. Spencer, A. Chew, M. Green, C. Chew, W. Beam, R. Croft and F. Croft. (Democratic Advocate June 22, 1895)

A response the Reese column was printed the following week: "The Reese base ball boys ought to inform the public of the truth about the game of ball played between them and the Wesley boys June 8. The Wesley boys made but 7 hits. The reason why they did not hit oftener is because John Mitten, of Westminster, hit more men than he threw balls over the base, hitting 6 out of 9 in three innings. Wesley boys had only six players and three spectators. The Wesley pitcher Croft, had no support. His speed was good and his curves better and he had fine control of his ball. The Reese boys are not able to bat him out of the box. They were glad enough to have the game called. Their pitcher, Mitten, gave out at the end of the third inning and could not throw a ball over a plate 4 x 4 feet. The Wesley umpire was too true and would not lie about a decision. Every strike that passed over the plate was called on either side. Mitten could not throw it over the plate is why they speak wrongly of the umpire. Two base hits - there was not one made. Errors by ten fielders allowed them to get two bases. The Reese boys I am sorry to say have got no respect for themselves or they would publish the truth to the public."

Photo caption: Baseball rivalries were hotly contested between many Carroll County communities during the late 19th century. A group of baseball players from Manchester, who posed informally for this photograph, are representative of community residents who provided entertainment on the local ballfields.