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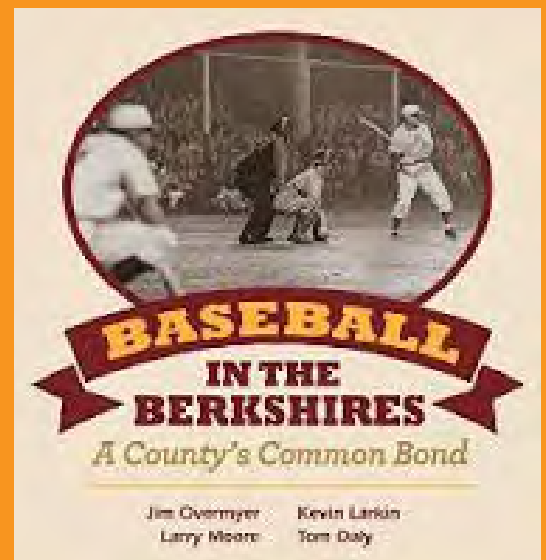
Baseball in the Berkshires: A County's Common Bond

By Jim Overmyer, Larry Moore, Kevin Larkin, & Tom Daly

Chapter 1 "The History of Professional
Baseball in Berkshire County" (Pages 10-12)

With the exception of a major league team one could call one's own, nearly every significant milestone in baseball history has an example in Berkshire County. The history of baseball in the county includes 28 men born or raised here who spent between one game and 18 seasons in the major leagues, and two who played at the highest level of black baseball long before professional ball was integrated. There are other major leaguers from elsewhere who settled in the Berkshires after their playing careers. And a long list of natives who played minor league baseball. Others, including a current top-level major league executive, have been front office leaders, umpires, and trainers.

Before there was baseball in its current form there was something called town ball. This early version was also called "round ball," not because the ball was round (what other shape would it likely be?) but because a batter ran around a set of bases to make a score. This clearly differentiated the game from other bat and ball versions, cricket for example, in which batters and runners shuttled between only two bases.



Baseball in the Berkshires

Program at Dewey Hall on May 12 at 7:30 pm

Exhibit May 13 - July 4th, Weekends, 11am-4pm

Exhibit Reception, May 20, 4 pm-6 pm

Town ball had bases, a pitcher, a batter, and fielders, although the rules differences from baseball as we know it were striking. In town ball there was no foul territory, so everything hit could be played by the fielders, runners could take nearly any route they chose to get to the next base and the size of the teams, within limits, was dictated mostly by how many players were available. Runners could be put out by “soaking,” being struck by a thrown ball, which mercifully was softer than today’s brand. A single out, rather than three, constituted a half inning. The winning team was the first to achieve an agreed-upon number of runs.

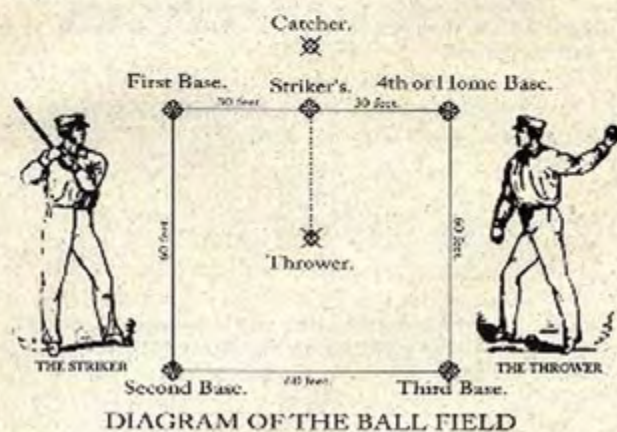
The prevailing set of rules for town ball were called the Massachusetts Game, and the sport was widely played here. Often, as was the case in more populous areas, the ball team also functioned as a social club, with a dinner or luncheon sponsored by the home team in addition to the good-natured contest. Being soundly defeated was not a shameful thing, since the ability levels among players and teams varied widely in those early days, but failing to fulfill the social obligations accompanying a game were. A team from Sandisfield was reported to have been out of sorts in 1859 when their hosts from nearby Colebrook, CT refused to pay for supper after having been overwhelmed by 52 runs.

While town ball was the preferred game at the beginning of this mid-century era, the modern version of the game was being developed down in New York City, with a team of young businessmen and artisans called the Knickerbockers getting much of the credit.

The rules of that version, which included a nine-inning game of three outs per turn at bat and, after some experimentation, 90-foot base paths, became known, logically, as the New York Game. The first New York Game in New England took place on the Boston Common in 1858, and by 1859 newspaper accounts of games in the Berkshires, with nine-inning line scores and the now-familiar field positions for the players, clearly intimated that the new rules had taken root here.

THE RULES OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GAME (TOWN BALL)

The Rules & Regulations
Governing The Game Of Base Ball
As Adopted By
The Massachusetts Association
Of Base Ball Players
At Dedham, May 13, 1858.



Copies of
“Baseball in the
Berkshires” are
available to purchase
at the Old Stone Store
and by clicking
here.

Message from the President

Greetings Friends, Members & Countrymen/women,

It is again with great pride to provide a little ramble for our newsletter. As usual we have much great news and accomplishments. More feathers for our head dress and I'll just start rambling off the top of my head with no order of time or importance. Everything we do is important and I am sure you are just as proud as I am to be a member of the Sheffield Historical Society. Thomas William's Berkshire Military Museum exhibit was a great hit, no surprise considering the remarkable job this young curator did creating the exhibit. A Vietnam Veterans Panel made for a living history program that had all in attendance riveted. The Good Friday Bake Sale held by Sue Petrucci and her students in the Mt. Everett Culinary Arts class once again provided us with nearly \$800 to go toward our scholarship program. I hope those that attended the volunteer appreciation breakfast came away with full and happy stomachs. Looking forward to the near future we have a wonderful baseball exhibit and program that is sure to rival anything we have ever done. Our annual golf tournament is coming in June and that also benefits our scholarship program. Also in June is our annual meeting and please feel most welcome to attend.



Do not forget to remind yourself AND tell your friends that our Old Stone Store and Mark Dewey Research Center are great resources for ANYBODY to use. The nicest folks in the world staff these places and make for a most wonderful experience. They are right in our back yard!

I don't believe in begging for dough in every letter so I will not do so here. Just remember that the best nation after the USA is DONATION and open up that membership letter that I just signed and sent. We will have open arms to anything that happens to come our way. Also remember that we are a society of like-minded history buffs young and old. We have fun and do great things. Please talk a friend into joining. If they are a bit short I will personally pay their first year dues or offer a discount. Instead of the low low price of only \$15.00 I will see to it that we can admit one for ONLY \$14.99. Remember what that man on the C-note said: A penny saved is a penny earned. In closing I must once again thank the multitude of volunteers that keep this society a great one. 45 years strong!!

Sincerely,

Your FLB, (fat little buddy), The Prez.

Recognition

Vietnam Veterans Panel Discussion



As partner with the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration, the society held a panel discussion of local Vietnam veterans in April. On our panel were : Al Soto, Herman Tyrone Belanger, Al Romeo, and Hank Morris. The principal of Mount Everett Regional School, Glen Devoti, moderated the discussion with students Madison Ullrich and Jaclyn Derwitsch asking the questions. Hearing the first hand accounts from these soldiers expanded the understanding of the war in ways that no history book could do.



Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast



Each year we thank those who volunteer for the society with a appreciation breakfast. The breakfast was great fun, but so is volunteering itself. There are many ways to get involved: working at the Old Stone Store, helping out in the Mark Dewey Research Center, organizing our collection of artifacts, doing demonstrations for our Living History Day, lending a hand at the Sheffield in Celebration salad bar, tending the gardens... and so many other ways. If you'd like to volunteer, once or on a regular basis, just email or call . We will find a good fit for you.



upcoming events

May 29th

Voices from the Front: Letters Home

Memorial Day
Bring your family
military documents
to be scanned at the
Mark Dewey
Research Center

For an hour before and after the Memorial Day parade, the Mark Dewey Research Center will be open for parade-goers to stop in with letters from family members and friends who wrote home while serving in the military. The letters will be scanned and will become part of our ongoing collection of first-hand accounts of service members from Sheffield. Photos and service records are welcome to be scanned as well, and the scanning process takes only a couple of minutes.

June 9th

Annual Meeting



Members of the Society are invited to the Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social on Friday, June 9, at 7:30pm at Dewey Hall. If you're not yet a member, there's plenty of time to become one before this celebration.

June 19th

Golf Tournament

The historical society's annual Scholarship Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, June 19th at the Canaan Country Club, beginning at 3pm and finishing up with prizes and good food. It is open to all who want to have some fun and show off a little out on the greens. Non-golfers can also purchase a dinner-only ticket. Email or check our website for details on entering. For details on entering check our website, email: sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com, or call 413-229-2694.



SHS in The News

Main Streets & Back Roads: Sheffield

Historical society member, Kathy Tetro, is a regular watcher of WCBV Channel 5's weekly newsmagazine *Chronicle*. The series which has run for 35 years, is known for its segment "Main Streets & Back Roads" where different rural towns from around the New England are profiled. Last summer, while working on the "Where the Berkshires Began..." exhibit, she contacted *Chronicle*. Perhaps they would like to film a segment in



Thomas Williams being interviewed about guest curating an exhibit at the Sheffield Historical Society

Sheffield, and "Where the Berkshires Began..." would be a great way to show viewers across the region just how steeped in history the town is. It had been a while since *Chronicle* had featured our neck of the woods, in fact almost twenty-five years, we would later find out.

Click here to watch segments from Chronicle



Catherine Miller getting ready to talk about the history of the Old Stone Store

A few weeks ago a producer from *Chronicle* called the historical society, wanting to do a "Main Streets & Back Roads" segment on Sheffield. "Where the Berkshires Began...", which will return for a second installment exhibit this summer, and the historical society would be highlighted in the segment in addition to other places and people who make the town so interesting. Look out for an email from us on when the show will air.

from our collection...

Baseball Team Photos

A preview of just some of the photos that will be in the Baseball in the Berkshires exhibit. These Sheffield teams played in the early 1900's.



*The
Sheffield
Historical Society*



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Jennifer Owens, Administrator
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413-229-2694

Office Hours

Tuesday 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Friday 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Sheffield Historical Society

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Visit us on Facebook

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K.C. Clow, James Miller, & David Prouty, Volunteers
mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org

413-229-3682

Office Hours

Monday 1:30 pm-4:00 pm

Friday 1:30pm-4:00 pm

or by appointment

Old Stone Store

On the Green in Sheffield

Weekends 11:00 am-4:00 pm

413-229-2287

The Sheffield Historical Society invites the support of you and your friends through membership.

Name(s) _____ E-Mail _____

Address _____

Please check: New Renew

Individual (\$15 - \$50) Family(\$51 - \$100) Patron (\$101 - \$500) Sponsor (\$501 - \$1,000)

Please make checks payable to: The Sheffield Historical Society. Send to : P.O. Box 747, Sheffield , MA 01257