

“Their Hands Are All Out Playing: ” Business and Amateur Baseball, 1845-1917

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At the actual spot in Cooperstown where Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball stands a statue of a farm boy with a baseball bat. This barefoot boy in overalls and a straw hat is as mythically symbolic as the Doubleday legend itself. The pastoral image represented by the statue grows logically out of the Doubleday myth, a myth that had the game invented in a cow pasture by the future Civil War general and his school chums.

James Fenimore Cooper himself could not have imagined a more appealing setting for the genesis of the national game than the town founded by his father. The bucolic little village on the shore of glittering Lake Ostego would have been the perfect backdrop for a field full of ball-playing country boys. Indeed, writing in 1838 (a year before Doubleday's alleged invention), Cooper fictionally described a ball game taking place on the lawn of his family's Cooperstown home. But these ball players were not farm boys. They were a group of shouting, swearing apprentices led by a "notorious street brawler" who, at first, refused requests to vacate the lawn. Eventually, however, the apprentices defiantly took their game to the village street after being told that the town trustees had banned street play, and that playing among the roses and dahlias was "aristocratic."¹

Cooper's assertive and anti-aristocratic apprentices are much more representative of the kind of people who actually played baseball than is the farm boy statue. Both blue and white collar workers flocked to the game in the Civil War era because it replicated and reenforced the work experiences that so many of them shared. For seventy years historians have been pointing to the apparent contrast between baseball and the growing cities as the reason for its success in the mid-nineteenth century. They saw baseball as compensatory, as providing the new urban workingmen with elements missing from their factory and office jobs. Such an interpretation, however, runs counter to the preponderance of modern sociological and anthropological evidence. Rather than being compensatory, most leisure appears to be congruent, that

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1. James Fenimore Cooper, *Home as Found* (Boston Houghton, Mifflin and Co., (1838), 157-159.

is, leisure activities incorporate and are derived from work patterns and values. Baseball combined some elements of pre-industrial single-combat sports with the highly organized, efficient, cooperative activities demanded by modern business. Thus, as I have discussed in an earlier article, baseball was a leisure time transition from agrarian to urban life that appealed to the working class not because it compensated for missing elements in the new work environment, but because it was congruent with business life.²

Building on that previous theoretical analysis of the reasons for baseball's popularity among both white and blue collar employees, this article explores how employers slowly, and somewhat reluctantly, awakened to the compatibility of business and amateur baseball among their workers. Baseball's congruence with business, and therefore its usefulness as a socializing institution, seems clear enough from a modern perspective. It was much less obvious to nineteenth century men and, at first, the business community was schizophrenic in its attitude toward the game. On the one hand, large numbers of young blue and white collar workers, and some employers, played amateur baseball, while on the other, there was little formal support and occasional outright opposition from many businessmen. Fear that baseball would distract workers from their commitment to the job blinded employers to the fact that in many ways baseball mimicked business and trained players in attitudes useful for work as well as play. After thirty years of argument by baseball's supporters, employers began adopting a more benign attitude toward the game in the 1880's. Company sponsored teams appeared, and their success led to the full-fledged acceptance of baseball as part of the industrial recreation programs of the Progressive Era. Thus by the First World War employers had come to accept, and even exploit, the fact that baseball was compatible with business—which was the reason the game had become popular among urban workers in the first place, a half-century earlier.³

Although very few nineteenth century commentators recognized that baseball and work were similar, many of them remarked on those elements of the game that replicated the work experience. Most of these qualities can be summed up in the concept of efficiency. Baseball emulated business in its specialization and division of labor, its structural integration, its emphasis on speed, and quantifiable production. In other words baseball, like business, was rational, or to use the nineteenth century's favorite adjective, it was "scientific."⁴

Commenting on the close of the 1856 season, the *New York Clipper*, a sporting journal, noted the growth of the game, and predicted that it "bids fair to become a formidable rival to the more scientific game of cricket."⁵ Ten

2. Steven M. Gelber, "Working at Playing: The Culture of the Work Place and the Rise of Baseball," *Journal of Social History* 16 (June, 1983), 3-20

3. For a similiar argument in a non-sports context see, Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspect of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts Shoemakers and Industrial Morality, 1826-1860," *Labor History* 15 (1974), 367-394.

4. John Dizikes, *Sportsmen and Gamesmen* (Boston: Houghton Co., 1981), 298-301.

5. *New York Clipper*, Nov. 22, 1856, 447.

years later the *Ball Players' Chronicle* derided early baseball as little more than a casual pastime for the “leisure hours of a summer afternoon.” But, said the paper, practicality had dictated a steady stream of improvements over the decade and finally baseball had emerged as “the equal of cricket as a scientific game—that is, as a game requiring the mental powers of judgment, calculation and quick perception to excel in. . .”⁶

Nineteenth century analysts of baseball cited the American love of technical innovation as the reason for the continuous improvement of the game. Americans are a scientific people who are “constantly improving, or seeking to improve, anything and everything with which they are connected,” boasted the *American Chronicle of Sports and Pastimes* in 1868. From household items to engines, we were always making things better and did no less for our sports. Baseball, said the paper, had changed more in ten years than cricket had in four hundred.⁷ When, in 1862, the Charter Oak ball club of Hartford, Connecticut proposed to “establish on a scientific basis the health-giving and scientific game of ball [to] promote good fellowship,” the telegraphers and clerks who made up the team were invoking a series of positive images—health, friendship and science.⁸

The shared value of efficiency that linked business and baseball manifested itself in both fields through an interest in innovation and quantification. Symbolically, if not typically, these characteristics came together in the person of Frederick W. Taylor, the father of “scientific management.” Taylor was convinced that there was one best way to perform all tasks, and that way could be determined through time and motion study of the worker. Taylor summed up the meaning of scientific management in words that apply as easily to the ball field as to the factory: “Science, not rule of thumb. Harmony, not discord. Cooperation, not individualism. Maximum output, in place of restricted output. The development of each man to his greatest efficiency.”⁹

Not surprisingly, Taylor was a sports enthusiast who invented a number of technical “improvements” in tennis rackets and golf clubs. He also is credited with having introduced overhand pitching while a student at Tufts University in the 1870s. Although such a motion was illegal, it was also more efficient, and thus Taylor chose to ignore the rule in order to scientifically improve his performance.¹⁰

6. *Ball Player's Chronicle* (New York City), Sept. 19, 1867, 6.

7. *American Chronicle of Sports and Pastimes* (New York City), June 18, 1868, 202; see also *New England Base Ballist* (Boston), Aug. 13, 1868, 6; J. R. Hildebrand, “The Geography of Games: How the Sports of Nations from a Gazetteer of their Habits and Histories of their People,” *National Geographic Magazine*, 36 (Aug. 1919), 109.

8. Phyllis Kihn, “The Charter Oak Nine,” *Connection Historical Society Bulletin* 26 (April, 1961), 56-57; see also *Clipper*, Nov. 7, 1857, 232; Harry Palmer, “America's National Games,” *Outing* 12 (July, 1888), 351.

9. Fredrick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 140.

10. Frank B. Copley, *Frederick W. Taylor: Father of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 72; J.A.C. Brown, *The Social Psychology of Industry: Human Relations in the Factory* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1954), 12; see also, Frederick W. Cozens and Florence Scovill Stumpf, *Sports in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); 53; Joffre Dumazedrier, *Toward a Society of*

Taylor constantly sought to express his concern with efficiency in numerical terms. Numbers are clear, concise and scientific. Moreover, as Allen Guttmann has pointed out, the quantification of games permits the establishment of records that allow competition with the past as well as with those against whom one is competing directly.” Literally, “records” are not merely the best, but all recorded information. Rational business is dependent on records, especially on numerical records. And, in fact, the amateur era of baseball coincided with the period in which modern double-entry accounting was widely taught to aspiring young men in hundreds of proprietary business colleges.¹²

“In a commercial community like ours, the scientific mode of keeping accounts is a study of surpassing interest,” noted a mid-nineteenth century accounting text.¹³ And inevitably this preoccupation with account keeping expressed itself in the national game. In Philip Curtiss’ 1915 novel, *The Ladder*, baseball player-clerk Frank Connor commented that baseball “percentages were figured with eager pen by men who groaned aloud at having to figure commissions.”¹⁴ The bookkeepers at Connor’s insurance company used the same job skills as they shifted back and forth from work to play. This early link between quantification in work and play continues. Recently Roger Angell has observed that boxscore totals “—batter’s credit vs. pitcher’s debit—balance as exactly as those in an accountant’s ledger,” and novelist Robert Coover created a fictional accountant who used dice and a record book to fantasize the history of an entire league.¹⁵

The early and continuing quantification of baseball, like its cooperative structure, and division of labor, recapitulated the work environment of its players. Numbers measured both individual and collective production. They provided a basis for measurement against previous years and thus could be used to judge progress. The numbers were objective, rational—scientific.¹⁶ They were not scientific in an abstract theoretical sense. They were scientific in a pragmatic, practical, applied business sense.

Speed was the final aspect of efficiency that made baseball appealing to nineteenth century businessmen and employees. The agonizingly measured pace of baseball, when compared to football, basketball, hockey and other

Leisure (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 78; Cary Goodman, *Choosing Sides: Playground and Street Life on the Lower East Side* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 144-145.

11. Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) 51-54.

12. Gary Jon Prevtis and Barbara Dubis Merino, *A History of Accounting in America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 67.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

14. Philip Curtiss, *The Ladder: The Story of a Casual Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1915), 111.

15. Michael Vincent Oriard, “Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction From the Beginning to the Present.” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1979), 345.

16. Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1978), 109; John Lahr, “The Theatre of Sport,” in Marie Hart, ed., *Sports in the Sociocultural Process* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm C. Brown Co., 1972), 204-205; Damon Rice, *Seasons Past* (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1967), 2; Ralph Andreado, *No Joy in Mudville: The Dilemma of Major League Baseball* (Cambridge, Mass.: Shenkman Publishing Co., 1965), 28-29; Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports; End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls and the Consecration of the American Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 62-63.

modern team sports, needs to be viewed in historical perspective. Although several recent authors have emphasized baseball's timelessness and freedom from the clock, that interpretation of the game's appeal stems from its contrast with subsequent timed games.¹⁷ In the mid-nineteenth century, baseball won acclaim not because it liberated men from the tyranny of time but because it allowed them to operate within the constraints of time. By the Civil War America had become a nation ruled by the clock. Cheap time pieces could be found in almost every pocket and home and they allowed people to measure and coordinate their activities.¹⁸ While baseball never became a timed game per se, its only rival for player allegiance in the period 1845 to 1876 was cricket, and compared with its British cousin, baseball was a model of speed and efficiency.

Because they were structurally similar and thus provided players with analogous experiences, both cricket and baseball experienced an upsurge of popularity among men connected with business prior to the Civil War. But even the older game's most ardent supporters feared it would lose ground to baseball because cricket was so slow. Cricket wasted time, and as the *Clipper* noted, "time in this country is money. We have not in America any class of the community who have the leisure to practice the game as they do in England. Here we can only devote hours while there they can spend days."¹⁹

When they linked time, money and the speed of the game, nineteenth century writers and players were saying two things. First, they were responding to the total elapsed time it took to play a game. Baseball games that frequently took fewer than two hours did not unduly interfere with business.²⁰ Pioneer sports historian Charles Peeverly praised baseball in 1866 because it could start at four or five in the afternoon and still finish before sunset. "consequently the great mass, who are in a subordinate capacity, can participate."²¹ Second, the game itself has perceived as fast and exciting and thus more attuned to the "American temperament and disposition" than cricket.²² Americans wanted an immediate decision, explained an article on cricket, they did not have the patience to wait for half a day to see who had won.²³

While not governed by the clock, baseball had a clock-like efficiency that appealed to nineteenth century businessmen and employees. Like their expanding firms, it contained major elements of business rationality but without

17. *Ibid.*, 120; George Crella, "Baseball and the American Dream," *Massachusetts Review* 16 (Summer, 1975), 563.

18. Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of America Life, 1600-1865* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 129, 134.

19. *Clipper*, Sept. 8, 1860, 164; repeated in *American Chronicle*, Feb. 13, 1868, 52; see also *Clipper*, April 30, 1864, 19.

20. Fred W. Lange, *History of Baseball in California and Pacific Coast Leagues, 1847-1938* (Oakland, Calif.: 1938), 14; Clarence Deming, "Old Days in Baseball," *Outing* 40 (1902), 357.

21. Charles A. Peeverly, *The Book of America on Pastimes Containing a History of the Principal Base Ball, Cricket Rowing and Yachting Clubs of the United States* (New York: by the Author, 1866), 338.

22. *Ibid.*, 337; for an interesting discussion of the cricket-baseball competition see Ian Tyrrell, "The Emergence of Modern American Baseball," 1850-1880," in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds., *Sports in History* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 205-216.

23. Barnett Phillips, "Cricket in the Forties," *Harper's Weekly* 38 (Sept. 22, 1894), 908; *Philosophy of the National Games* (no place, no publisher, 1869), in New York Public Library: *Clipper*, Feb. 18, 1860, 349.

totally sacrificing the role of the individual. As an outdoor game baseball provided a physical change of pace, but structurally the game mirrored the work environment. The urban businessmen and workers who first played the game and continued to be its strongest supporters in the nineteenth and early twentieth century found in baseball a scientific leisure experience. It reflected and reinforced a set of values, attitude, and relationships that had been formed in the growing commercial and industrial cities of the Civil War era.

Baseball was born in the city and grew almost exclusively in cities before the Civil War. All twenty-four charter members of the National Association of Base Ball Clubs in 1857 were from the New York metropolitan area.²⁴ After the war, the game did spread to small villages and towns, while it remained very strong in the large cities.²⁵ In 1867 even a small town like Waterloo, Iowa had six teams, and in 1868 New York (including Brooklyn) had more than 150, with forty more nearby in the cities of New Jersey.²⁶ But even the Waterloo farm boys were not always what they seemed to be. It is true that "Doe" Vail, who pitched for the Waterloo Empires in 1867, lived with his parents on a local farm. But it is also true that Vail had been a telegrapher in New York City before his parents had moved to Iowa and would leave the farm to pursue a career in telegraphy all the way to the presidency of A.T.& T.²⁷

What we know of the origins of early professional ball players reinforces the connection between baseball and urban centers. Although pioneer professional ball-player and sporting good manufacturer Albert Spalding argues that the early stars came not from large cities but from "towns," the towns he mentions (Marshalltown, Iowa; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Rochester and Coming, New York), while modest in size, were all small manufacturing cities, and usually important local transportation hubs as well.²⁸ They might well have been models for the fictional Illinois river city of Catalpa, "a busy manufacturing and milling community," and setting for an early baseball novel. Catalpa's first baseball teams were made up of Civil War veterans but later clubs were divided between lawyers and government workers on the one hand, and workers from the flour and lumber mill on the other.²⁹

Spalding's own hometown of Rockford, Illinois was much like Catalpa. In 1876, the year of the formation of the National League, and about the time Spalding hit his peak professionally, Rockford had more than 14,000 people, two rail lines and numerous factories that made cotton, paper, wool, iron,

24. Harry Ellard, *Baseball in Cincinnati: A History* (Cincinnati: Johnson & Hardin, 1907), 26.

25. Cecil O. Monroe, "The Rise of Baseball in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 19 (June, 1938), 181.

26. Carl B. Cone, "Baseball and Telephony," *The Palimpsest* 24 (Aug., 1943), 248; *American Chronicle*, July 23, 1868, 267; *Ball Players Chronicle*, Sept. 12, 1867, 10; *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1867, 1-2; M. J. Kelly, *The Base-Ball Guide for 1868* (New York: Robert M. Dewitt, 1868); Kihn, "The Charter Oak Nine," 62; John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1974), 30-31, 93.

27. Cone, "Baseball and Telephony," 252-253.

28. Albert G. Spalding, *America's National Game* (New York: American Sports Publishing Co., 1911), 115; *Lippincott's Gazetteer of the World* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1880), 543, 790, 1360.

29. Noah Brooks, *Our Base Ball Club and How it Won the Championship* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1884), 11-12.

watches and farm machinery.³⁰ The majority of Spalding's original teammates on Rockford's Forest City Club were employees of local businesses, as were the members of the teams that opposed them.³¹ Moreover, nine of the fifteen players on Spalding's 1871 Boston team came from big cities. Four of the remaining six came from lesser manufacturing cities, and only one came from a non-industrial town.³² Similarly, fifteen of the seventeen professional players in the Brooklyn club of that year came from big cities and the other two from small industrial cities.³³ And, of seventeen players on the 1888 New York City professional ball club twelve were born in large cities and three of the other four in small industrial cities.³⁴

Several recent studies have indicated that approximately two-thirds of the urbanites who played baseball in the immediate postbellum period were white collar workers, while almost all of the remaining third worked in skilled jobs.³⁵ Professionals, managers, proprietors, clerks and skilled workmen dominated baseball during its first thirty years. These men were, for the most part, amateurs who found the game an attractive leisure activity and played because they enjoyed the game, not for some explicit ulterior motive such as economic mobility. The clustering of teams around specific firms and occupations supports the idea that baseball attracted men whose economic environment had primed them to value team effort.

The first organized baseball club, the New York Knickerbockers, was made up overwhelmingly of men engaged in business. Of the eighty-three members who listed their occupations in the club book between 1845 and 1866, all but ten worked in business (the exceptions were two "gentlemen" and eight professionals-lawyers, doctors and a dentist). Of the remaining seventy-three, sixty-two worked in service industries such as insurance, banking, brokerages and retail sales, and four were manufacturers.³⁶ The preponderance of commerce over manufacturing may either reflect the distribution of business in New York City, or different working hours for the two areas. Between 1850 and 1890 all employees in major industries worked at least ten, and as many as twelve, hours a day, six days a week.³⁷ While there are no comparative

30. Spalding, *America's National Game*, 115; *Lippincott's Gazetteer*, 1880.

31. Horace Buker, "Cradle of Baseball," *Rockford Republic* (Rockford, Illinois), March 15-September 20, 1922, scrapbook. New York Public Library, 1-13; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 117; Roger H. Van Bolt, "Cap' Anson's First Contract," *Annals of Iowa* 31 (April, 1953), 617.

32. George Wright, *Record of the Boston Base Ball Club Since its Organization With a Sketch of its Players* [Boston, 1874], 9-12.

33. June Rankin, *The New York and Brooklyn Base Ball Clubs: Brief and Authentic Sketches of the Clubs With Portraits of the Managers and Individual Players* (New York: Richard K. Fox, Printer, 1888); this trend continued into the Progressive Era, see Steven A. Reiss, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and the American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Ct., Greenwood Press, 1980), 180-184.

34. Rankin, *The New York and Brooklyn Base Ball Clubs*.

35. Steven A. Reiss, "Sport and the American Dream: A Review Essay," *Journal of Social History* 14 (Winter, 1980), 296; Melvin L. Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics: Sport in New York City, 1820-1870" (Ph. D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980), 331, 357.

36. Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York, "Club Book, 1859-1868," Spalding Collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

37. Clarence D. Long, *Wages and Earnings in the United States, 1860-1890* (Princeton, N. J. Princeton University Press, 1960), 35-38; Joseph S. Zeisel, "The Workweek in American Industry, 1850-1956," in Eric Larrabee and Rolf Meyersohn, eds., *Mass Leisure* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), 146; Susan E. Hirsch,

data for white collar workers, there are some indications that many office employees worked from only nine to four.³⁸ The large number of clerks on the Knickerbockers (twenty-one, or twenty-five percent of all members) supports the assumption that a wide variety of nineteenth century office workers enjoyed bankers' hours. And commercial workers in specialized industries like wholesale markets had time because these businesses opened very early and were closed by the afternoon.³⁹

Time was a problem for some, admitted the Clipper in 1858. But the paper, that was always promoting baseball, suggested that "those who can afford to, take a couple of days in the week for practice." For those who could not, the paper pointed out that there were two or three hours of light after business hours and asked, why don't "some of our young men employed in large work shops or warehouses form themselves into clubs and have a little recreation after the toils of the day are over."⁴⁰ The truly dedicated took this advice and refused to allow the press of business to be a barrier. Some Cincinnati businessmen, unable to spare time for practice during the day, got up at four in the morning to play before breakfast.⁴¹ And the blue collar Eckford team of Brooklyn not only had to settle for a single weekly practice, but also had to wait a year after its formation to play another team because, among other reasons, matches were traditionally played on Tuesday afternoon when manual workers had to be on the job.⁴²

As the Knickerbocker pattern indicates, relatively few men outside business played the game. But, those nonbusinessmen who did play seem to have shared a vocational experience that rewarded collective effort. While there appears to have been an occasional team made up of physicians (the Knickerbockers themselves may have evolved from an informal doctors' club), lawyers were the most common profession found on the diamond.⁴³ Lawyers, unlike physicians who practice alone, were commonly members of firms and constantly operated in the complex bureaucracy of the legal system. By the same token, cooperation on the stage spilled over onto the ball field. Theatrical teams were popular in the 1860s, as they still are. The Philadelphia Athlet-

Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark 1800-1860 (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 33.

38. David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness* (London: Unwin University Books, 1958), 23-25; Margery Davies, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: The Feminization of the Clerical Labor Force," in Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich, and David M. Gordon, *Labor Market Segmentation* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1975), 287.

39. Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics," 362.

40. *Clipper*, April 3, 1858, 396.

41. Ellard, *Baseball in Cincinnati*, 55; Harold Seymour, *Baseball The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 24

42. *The Metropolitan: A Journal of Field Games of Bull* (New York City), July 11, 1883, 1.

43. Roger C. Adams, "Nestor of Ball Players," (unpublished ms., Buffalo, New York, August, 1939), in box "Troup Papers, no. 13," Spalding Collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library; *Clipper*, June 23, 1866, 84; *Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Field Sports, Literature and the Stage* (New York City), September 26, 1857, 390; Ellard, *Baseball in Cincinnati*, 40; Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage*, 94; Seymour, *Baseball*, 24; Writers Program of the Iowa W.P.A., "Baseball! The Story of Iowa's Early Innings," *Annals of Iowa* 22 (April, 1941), 654.

ics actually got its start in 1859 among the amateur singers of the Handel and Haydn Society, and at least four New York theaters fielded teams in 1867.⁴⁴

Business workers, particularly those in commerce, dominated baseball well into the early professional era. They founded and manned most of the antebellum teams. In Baltimore and Buffalo, New Orleans and New York, the story was the same—merchants, dealers, bankers, brokers and their clerks made up the pioneer teams.⁴⁵ Especially the clerks—they were everywhere; government clerks in Washington, D.C., and commercial clerks in almost every other city.⁴⁶

Until the introduction of the typewriter in the 1870s (and continuing at a decreasing level through the turn of the century), male clerks constituted a major component of many businesses.⁴⁷ Trained at proprietary business schools, they did the bookkeeping, writing, record keeping, and many other minor office tasks for both service and manufacturing industries.⁴⁸ While some men, like Melville's Bartleby, remained clerks their whole lives, for many others clerking was a kind of business apprenticeship from which one could rise.⁴⁹ Although the relative percentage of male to female clerical workers decreased after 1870, the actual number of male clerical workers nevertheless increased steadily with the expansion of business.⁵⁰ This growing body of ambitious officebound young men were prime candidates for a socially acceptable sport that would provide both moderate exercise and leisure time replication of the structure and values necessary for a successful business career.

Our Merchants have to close their stores
Their clerks away are staying,

44. Weston D. Fister, Scrapbook, clipping (n.d., n.p.), Library of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Cooperstown, New York; *Clipper*, October 13, 1883, 490; *Ball Players' Chronicle*, Nov. 7, 1867, 2; Henry Roxborough, *One Hundred Not Out: The Story of the Nineteenth Century Canadian Sport* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966), 113.

45. James H. Bready, *The Home Team: A Full Century of Baseball in Baltimore, 1859-1959* (1958); Joseph M. Overfield, "Baseball in Buffalo, 1865 to 1870; Heyday of the Niagras," *Niagra Frontier* 12 (Spring, 1965), 1-14; Dale A. Somers, *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1859-1900* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 21; "Reminiscences of the Ball Field," clipping, c. 1863 in John Doyle, "Scrap Book Made by John Doyle and Presented to John Heydler, Vol. 1, 1863-1865," Library of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Cooperstown, New York; *Spirit of the Times*, July 28, 1855, 282; *Clipper*, June 13, 1857, 58; *Ibid.*, June 20, 1857, 66; Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840-1985," *Histoire Social/Social History* 11 (1978), 151; Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1979), 52-53.

46. Spalding, *America's National Game*, 104; Seymour, *Baseball*, 54; *Clipper*, Oct. 6, 1866, 202; Stephen Freedom, "The Baseball Fad in Chicago, 1865-1870," *Journal of Sport History* 5 (Summer, 1978), 55-56.; *Ball Players' Chronicle*, June 27, 1867, 2; Harry Jebens, Jr. *Sports: A Microcosm of Twentieth-Century America* (St. Louis, Mo.: The Forum Series, Forum Press, 1978), 5; Oscar Handlin, *This was America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), 350.

47. Elyce J. Rotella, *From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 19870-1930* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1981), 61-64.

48. Margery Davies, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: The Feminization of Clerical Workers and Change in Clerical Work in the United States, 1870-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Brabdeis University, 1979), 95-110; Edmund J. James, "Commercial Education," in Nicholas Murray Butler, ed., *Monographs on Education in the United States*, no. 13 (n.p.: Department of Eductaion for the United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900).

49. Herman Melville, "Bartleby," in Jay Leyda, ed., *The Complete Stories of Herman Melville* (New York: Random House, 1949); Davies, "Woman's Place is at the Typewriter," 120-126.

50. Rotella, *From Home to Office*, 62.

Contractors too, can do no work,
Their hands are all out playing⁵¹

ran a popular song of 1857.

Although factory hands could never field as many teams as clerks because of their longer hours, skilled workmen did, nevertheless, comprise roughly a third of those who played ball in the amateur era. Nor were they late arrivals on the baseball scene. Teams of blue collar workers were widespread in the late 1850s. The most famous of these was the Brooklyn Eckford club, formed in 1857 by shipwrights and mechanics.⁵² However, the Trimountains of Boston were founded the same year by a group of workers in a watch-case shop.⁵³ Watch makers were typical of that class of workers who called themselves mechanics and who made up many of the early ball clubs. Although the term mechanic could apply to almost anyone who worked with his hands, nineteenth century American usage usually limited it to skilled workers, such as metal founders, watch makers, printers and carpenters.⁵⁴

While there are no records of organized blue collar baseball teams predating the Eckfords and Trimountains, they were not the first organized blue collar ball players in North America. Newark had a working class cricket team, the Mechanics, in 1856, and even they followed by more than a decade a Canadian cricket team, also the Mechanics, from the small industrial city of Cobourg, Ontario.⁵⁵ Of the four bat and ball antecedents to baseball, old cat, rounders, town ball and cricket, all except old cat were team games, but all except cricket were played informally and little information exists about them.⁵⁶ Cricket, however, has left a clearer trail, and its history strongly supports the hypothesis that team games developed in congruence with the business community.

Cricket was played in America as early as 1751 in New York, with the first organized club appearing in Boston in 1809 and spreading to other cities in the 1830s.⁵⁷ By the time of the Civil War, the game was played widely in Eastern and Midwestern cities where, in almost every case, it either preceded or coincided with baseball. Besides New York City and Boston, early organized cricket teams appeared in Albany, Troy and Schenectady, New York in 1839, Cincinnati, Ohio in 1845, and Utica and Syracuse, New York in 1848.⁵⁸ Ap-

51. Seymour, *Baseball*, 50.

52. *Metropolitan*, July 11, 1883, 2; Seymour, *Baseball*, 23-24.

53. *New England Base Ballist*, Aug. 6, 1868, 2.

54. Monte A. Calvert, *The Mechanical Engineer in America, 1830-1910: Professional Cultures in Conflict* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 29-30.

55. *Clipper*, June 28, 1856, 75; *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1856, 247; *Spirit of the Times*, Sept. 12, 1843, 339; *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1856, 331.

56. Tristram Potter Coffin, *The Old Ball Game: Baseball in Folklore and Fiction* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 6; Stewart Culin "Street Games of Boys in Brooklyn. N.Y.," *Journal of American Folklore* 4 (July, 1891), 231-233; Edward C. Devereux, "Backyard versus Little League Baseball," in Andrew Yianakakis, et. al., *Sport Sociology: Contemporary Themes* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1976), 100.

57. Charles Blancke, "Cricket in America," *Harper's Weekly* 35 (Sept. 26, 1891), 725; Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics," 257-258, 265; Roxborough, *One Hundred Not Out*, 54.

58. *Spirit of the Times*, Sept 15, 1839, 246; *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1848, 291; *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1845, 380; see also Howard M. Gitelman, *Workingmen of Waltham: Mobility in American Urban Industrial Development 1850-1890* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 147.

parently most of these early games were played by Englishmen since the *Clipper* claimed the first all-American cricket match was played between New York City and Newark teams in 1848.⁵⁹ Haverford College students, however, played cricket with English hosiery weavers prior to 1842, the year the students formed the first all-American team.⁶⁰ The English mill operatives in the Philadelphia area who began that city's cricket tradition were typical early players.⁶¹ American cricket, like baseball, developed in a business environment. In fact, of thirty-three cities that had cricket clubs in 1868, all but six also had sufficiently well organized baseball clubs to make national listings.⁶² Of those cities not represented by nationally listed baseball teams, many, such as Fall River, Massachusetts, Oswego and Utica, New York and Portsmouth, New Hampshire were eastern industrial and commercial centers in which cricket might have been filling the same ecological niche as baseball.⁶³

The tradition of working class cricket that goes back to the late eighteenth century in England continued in North America, and was promoted by the sporting press for its democratic qualities.⁶⁴ Far from seeing it as a symbol of old world social stratification, both Englishmen and Americans praised the game because it rewarded skill, not status. Cricket unites peer and peasant explained an 1856 British description, "the best men will be selected, let their position in society be what it may."⁶⁵ Echoing this theme the following year, a *Clipper* correspondent called on all Americans "whose occupation is sedentary" to patronize this "invigorating" game because it is a "great means of bringing into friendly intercourse all classes of society."⁶⁶

Indeed, American cricket could unite economic classes as in 1857 when Waltham, Massachusetts employers met a team of factory workers in "friendly strife and intercourse" on the cricket grounds. The following year, however, two similar clubs on Staten Island, New York showed that games could create acrimony as well as unity.⁶⁷ A team originally known as the New Brighton Mechanics Cricket Club, whose members lived "by their own personal labor," used the grounds of the New Brighton Cricket Club, whose members were a group of "cod-fish aristocrats," mostly bankers and dry goods clerks. First, the white collar workers, "alarmed at the idea of the two clubs being confused with each other," forced the Mechanics to change their

59. *Clipper*, Aug. 19, 1854, 4.

60. John A Lester, ed., *A Century of Philadelphia Cricket* (Philadelphia University of Philadelphia Press, 1951), 9-11.

61. Barnet Phillips, "Cricket in the Forties," *Harper's Weekly* 38 (Sept 22, 1894), 908; Digby E. Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), 358-359.

62. *American Chronicle*, March 19, 1868, 92; *Ibid.*, July 23, 1868, 267; *Ball Players' Chronicle*, Sept. 12, 1867, 10; *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1867, 1-2; Kelly, *The Base-Ball Guide for 1868*.

63. *American Chronicle*, July 23, 1868, 267; *Ball Players' Chronicle*, Sept. 12, 1867, 10; Writers Program of the Iowa W.P.A. "Baseball!," 628; for lacrosse, see, Allan Metcalfe, "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal: 1840-1901," in Richard Gruneau and John G. Albinson, eds., *Canadian Sport: Sociological Perspectives* (Don Mills, Ont., 1976).

64. John Ford, *Cricket: A Social History, 1700-1835* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), 88-97.

65. *Clipper*, May 23, 1856, 36.

66. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1857, 61; see also, Stephanie Lee Twin, "Jock and Jill: Aspects of Women's Sports History in America, 1870-1940" (Ph.D diss., Rutgers University, 1978), 25-26.

67. *Clipper*, Sept. 5, 1857, 156.

name to the Staten Island Cricket Club. And then, when members of the senior club realized they could play on Monday, July 5, 1858, a national holiday that was also the Mechanics' scheduled time to play, they demanded that the workers surrender the grounds to them. Although the Mechanics' employer, a member of the new Brighton team and "the natural protector and guardian of their rights," spoke up for them, the senior club threatened to kick the Mechanics out altogether unless they yielded. Not waiting to be evicted, the Mechanics walked off to find their own grounds.⁶⁸

There were other blue collar cricket clubs in the antebellum era in Clinton, Massachusetts and Philadelphia, and workman's baseball clubs in Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts, Philadelphia, Brooklyn and New York City.⁶⁹ The postbellum period, with its baseball mania, witnessed blue collar clubs across the country and in Canada as well.⁷⁰ The craze not only provided recreation for the workers, but also work for their wives—or at least for the wife of a Lynn, Massachusetts shoemaker who played the game in the evenings while his wife earned money by stitching baseballs at home.⁷¹

Because the actual role of business in early amateur baseball has been ignored, some writers have erroneously attributed the rise of baseball (and the functionally similar game of cricket) to a deliberate plan by the business middle class to socialize and control the working class. As a safe and civilized game, baseball provided a healthy alternative to more debilitating leisure pursuits like drinking and gambling and was a game in which young men could blow off steam and learn the value of cooperation.⁷² Such an argument, however, puts the cart before the horse. Employers opposed, as well as supported, ball games. Widespread doubts about baseball indicate that, despite assertions by recent critics, baseball was not used by those in positions of power to inculcate the working class with values that would make them both hard working and docile. One critic has baldly asserted that factory owners introduced team work and fair play "into games in order to have a source of sanction understood by large numbers. . . ."⁷³ "Capitalist production relations are reproduced symbolically in the relations of the participants in the sporting mode of production," argues Jean-Marie Brohm, because sports emphasize competition, the idea of record, a precisely ordered world view, and the principle of

68. Ibid., July 10, 1858, 91.

69. Ibid., Aug. 20, 1859, 143; Ibid., Oct. 3, 1858, 213; Ibid., July 10, 1858, 91; Ibid., Jan. 12, 1861, 306; *Spirit of the Times*, Aug. 20, 1859, 330; Seymour, *Baseball*, 25; Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1940, 1965), 187; the existence of so many blue collar cricket clubs weakens Tyrrell's thesis about the reasons for baseball's popular success, Tyrrell, "Emergence of Modern American Baseball," 209-215.

70. Writers Program of the Iowa W. P. A., "Baseball!," 632; Somers, *The Rise of Sports*, 117; Kihn, "The Charter Oak Nine," 58; Roxborough, *One Hundred Not Out*, 113.

71. Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 129-130.

72. Alan Geoffrey Ingham, "American Sport in Transition: The Maturation of Industrial Capitalism and Its Impact Upon Sport" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1978), 83-84; John W. Loy, Barry D. McPherson and Gerald Kenyon, *Sport and Social Systems: A Guide to the Analysis, Problems, and Literature* (Reading, Mass.: Addison, Wesley Publishing Co., 1978), 411.

73. Max Kaplan, *Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), 189-190.

maximum output.⁷⁴ Another critic has called this collection of values the “American sports creed” that serves as a “form of manipulative socialization” for the dominant social institutions.⁷⁵ Whatever the truth of these assertions for modern society they are not applicable to the early generations of baseball players. Although men on both sides of the pay envelope played, there were many reluctant employers who feared the game rather than used it. After all, no less authority on hard work and productive leisure than P.T. Barnum warned against “loungers” who wasted their time “in idleness, or at best base-ball, billiards, etc. . . .” When even the great showman was reminding people that “time is money” and that “idleness leads to immoral habits,” how could a more conventional businessman believe any less?⁷⁶

Well into the 1860s large numbers of employers opposed baseball and actively discouraged their employees from playing. The specific reasons for employer opposition are vague, but appear to be based on the assumption that attachment to some organization other than the firm would have a detrimental effect on the employees’ dedication to work. “The class of employers who object to clerks connected with baseball clubs allege . . . that it engages so much of the time and attention of their clerks that business is neglected.” explained one newspaper in 1868.⁷⁷ “Businessmen think everything a ‘waste of time’ which does not yield pecuniary profits,” echoed another.⁷⁸ In 1859, the directors of the Farmers’ and Mechanics’ Bank of Philadelphia forbade their clerks from being members of cricket or boating clubs and prohibited them from any connection at all with military or fire organizations.⁷⁹ Thus, the bank officers banned membership in all congruent leisure organizations that would reenforce the structure and attitudes created in the work place. Later that year, when two other Philadelphia area firms sponsored a cricket match between their employees, the *Clipper* called for “many such friendly encounters between the wealth producing classes of our country,” and pointedly criticized “that bank” for failing to see the benefits of such a game.⁸⁰

There were reports throughout the 1860s of business opposition to baseball from New England to the Midwest.⁸¹ “Complaints are general,” reported the *New York Times* in 1867, that young men played baseball to such a degree “that duties of importance to themselves or to their employers are seriously neglected and business is frequently interfered with.”⁸² As late as 1879 mill owners in Utica, New York ordered their workers to stop playing baseball.

74. Jean-Marie Brohm, *Sport—A Prison of Measured Time* (London: Ink Links, 1978), 67-69; Paul Hoch, *Rip Off the Big Game: The Exploitation of Sports by the Power Elite* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 106.

75. Loy, *Sport and Social Systems*, 381-383.

76. *Hamilton Spectator*, April 22, 1875, quotes in Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, 26.

77. *American Chronicle*, Feb. 27, 1867, 4.

78. *Ball Players’ Chronicle*, June 27, 1868, 4.

79. *Clipper*, June 11, 1859, 58; Poughkeepsie employers did the same, Clyde Griffon and Sally Griffon, *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 135.

80. *Clipper*, Oct. 8, 1859, 96.

81. Deming, “Old Days in Baseball,” 356: *Clipper*, May 2, 1868, 26; Betts, *America’s Sporting Heritage*, 96.

82. Quoted in *Ball Players’ Chronicle*, June 6, 1867, 4.

Any man caught engaging in the forbidden sport a second time was to be fired.⁸³ The rather defensive tone of pro-sports articles in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies also indicates a strong undercurrent of business resistance. While the opposition did not always manifest itself as blatantly as the cases cited above, supporters of the game appear to have felt a constant need to reassure skeptical employers that ball players could also be good workers.

Friends of baseball and cricket argued that ball games were moral and developed good character. But prior to the 1890s proponents stressed the unobjectionable nature of the games, and their development of general "citizenship" values more than those values that were specifically work related. In 1866 the *Clipper* defended baseball as "devoid of every reasonable objection that the most fastidious moralist could interpose."⁸⁴ The paper was clearly delighted to report that churches were "showing a more liberal disposition to the game's moral respectability."⁸⁵

The great concern that ball playing might be thought of as immoral or improper continued through the 1880s and provoked an emotional response to an 1881 letter in the *New York Times* that said baseball "was in the beginning a sport unworthy of men, and that it is now, in its fully developed state, unworthy of gentlemen."⁸⁶ The charge that the game was ungentlemanly stung. If it were so ungentlemanly, asked the *Clipper*, how could the writer account for its popularity among Ivy League college men and the employees of the stock exchange, the produce exchange and "hundreds of banking, insurance and commercial houses in our city?"⁸⁷ "Played as it should be played," continued the paper in a second response, "it admits of no trickery, or cheating, or underhand methods."⁸⁸

Much of baseball's appeal stemmed from the fact that, unlike almost all other male pastimes of the post bellum period, it was not morally tainted. "The fact is no outdoor sport or exercises has ever been introduced in this country which combines in such a degree all the attributes requisite for a manly, go-ahead, and moral people," as baseball, wrote the *Ball Players' Chronicle* in 1867. Not only could school boy and church goer participate without injury to health or morals, but baseball was a "sport every lady in the land can grace with her presence without fear of offensive language or deed."⁸⁹ The same could obviously not be said of other male entertainments such as the prize ring, the pool hall and the race course. "It is time," advised the *Chronicle*, "that we introduced an exercise and sport attractive enough to withdraw victims from the evils of other influences. . ."⁹⁰

83. *Clipper*, June 7, 1879, 85; also see, *Brooklyn Eagle*, "Base Ball and Business," c. 1885, clipping in, Henry Chadwick, "Chadwick Scrap Book—Base Ball," vol. 2, 1880-1890, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

84. *Clipper*, Jan. 13, 1866, 316.

85. *Ibid.*, June 23, 1866, 83.

86. *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1881, 582.

87. *Ibid.*, Sept. 17, 1881, 415.

88. *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1881, 582.

89. *Ball Players' Chronicle*, June 6, 1867, 4.

90. *Ibid.*

Baseball was the answer to a Victorian mother's prayers. It provided safe, wholesome, healthy and morally pure recreation for her sons whose urban occupational environment exposed them to dangerous, unclean and immoral temptations. "The human frame needs, and will have some relaxation from the cares of business," said the *Clipper* in 1859. The choice was not between work and play, but between healthful outdoor sport and "frequentering taverns, copping the king, or affecting some piece of fair but frail crinoline."⁹¹

In the view of many, baseball was the antidote produced by the same plant that created the poison. As the game of urban business employees it would save them from the sins of the city. Those who tried to suppress the game risked pushing young men into "sensual indulgences and solitary vices,"⁹² but when the game flourished, it provided a "remedy for many of the evils resulting from the immoral associations boys and young men of our cities are apt to become connected with," and thus merited "the endorsement of every clergyman in the country."⁹³

Similarly, baseball was publicized as an excellent method of exercise by the supporters of the physical culture movement that was gathering momentum in the pre-war years. Once again, arguments that baseball might benefit business were usually indirect. First, the commentators linked exercise with health, and then connected the two of them to business. The business nexus took two forms. Some athletic proponents condemned the country's "unnatural" preoccupation with making money and called for more leisure sports, while others claimed that athletics would be good for business.

The emergence of baseball dovetailed neatly with the "muscular Christianity" movement, a British-born drive to develop sound bodies through healthful outdoor exercise.⁹⁴ Americans were a "raw boned, cadaverous, stooped-shouldered, nervous set of mortals," who, sports enthusiasts argued, had "grown up without experiencing that glorious coursing of pure blood . . . which naturally flowed in the veins" of people who exercised in the open air.⁹⁵ Lamenting that we had grown "weak, nervous, dyspeptic, near-sighted and unmuscular" because we had strayed from "the love of outdoor exercise, farm and field work," that had characterized our "obese, jolly, whole-souled, fun-loving ancestors," article after article called upon Americans to "exercise in order to keep their health."⁹⁶

91. *Clipper*, June 11, 1859; see also *Metropolitan*, Aug. 12, 1882.

92. *Clipper*, April 30, 1859, 12.

93. Chad. [Henry Chadwick], *The Base Ball Player's Book of Reference* (New York: J. C. Haney & Co., 1866), n. p.; see also, *Ball Players' Chronicle*, Aug. 8, 1867; *Clipper*, Jan. 13, 1866, 316; Monroe, "The Rise of Baseball," 172.

94. Guy Lewis, "The Muscular Christianity Movement," *Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation* 37 (May, 1966); John A. Lucas, "A Prelude to the Rise of Sport: Ante Bellum America, 1850-1860," *Quest* 11 (December 1968); Arthur C. Cole, "Our Sporting Grandfathers: the Cult of Athletics as its Source," *Atlantic Monthly* 150 (1932), 88-96; John R. Betts, "American Medical Thought on Exercise as the Road to Health, 1820-1860," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 45 (March-April, 1971), 138-152.

95. *Clipper*, July 27, 1861, 120; *Ibid.*, April 23, 1859, 4.

96. *American Chronicle*, Jan 2, 1868; *Clipper*, April 3, 1858, 396; *New England Base Ballist*, Aug. 6, 1868, 2; Soreen Stewart Brynn, "Some Sports in Pittsburgh During the National Period, 1775-1860," part 2, "Growth and Acceptance of Sports: Legal and Illegal," *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine* 51 and 52 (1968 and 1969), 345-363 and 57-79.

Many sports proponents in the antebellum years perceived a basic incompatibility between work and play and were willing to explicitly state their anti-work ethic positions. In a real sense they agreed with the employer opponents who feared baseball would distract employees from work. Such distraction, they argued, was just what overworked employees needed. "The American works himself to death," said a Scottish visitor in 1858.⁹⁷ "Sleep, eat and work—work, eat and sleep," that was all Americans did, to the detriment of themselves and their offspring, complained the *Clipper*. "For Heaven's sake," it thundered, "get your nose off the grindstone; at least once a week get out in the fields and stretch your arms and legs; get the dust off your brains, and the rust off your consciences."⁹⁸ An excess of work could be as socially destructive as an excess of play. "Who are the people found guilty of forgeries, defalcations, frauds, etc?" asked the paper in 1856. "Are they not those devoted slaves of wealth who are so very smart that they have not time to be honest, and join in a little harmless out-door amusement?"⁹⁹ And two years later it announced, "We are too avaricious and too much absorbed in gain"—a warning hardly calculated to attract the support of the business community.¹⁰⁰

It was easy enough for newspaper writers to condemn excessive work and call for more play and games, but the employers bitten by the baseball bug could not toss the work ethic aside so easily. As capitalists they looked for maximum return on their investments, and somehow baseball had to be justified in traditional market terms if they were to be fully won over to the new sport. Thus, a second line of argument developed, one that promoted sports as beneficial to business. Although one writer did claim athletics were useful to the businessman because club membership would "enlarge his sphere of business acquaintance,"¹⁰¹ the most common argument linked baseball to exercise, exercise to good health, and good health to high productivity. "More sport," said the *Clipper*, and "we shall be the better for it—do more and better business—be hardier and better men and women."¹⁰²

Since, for reasons of age, if not inclination, employees were more likely to play ball than employers, much of the favorable discussion centered on the positive effect of baseball on workers. "Before the advent of base ball, there was no National pastime for Young America," editorialized the *New England Base Ballist* in 1868. "The only thought of businessmen in this country, seemed to be the closest attention to business." Having thus condemned excessive concern with business, the paper went on to explain that the young should have physical exercise in order to keep their health and be steady at their occupations.¹⁰³ On the one hand the paper called for less work, while

97. *Clipper*, Jan. 2, 1858, 37.

98. *Clipper*, July 27, 1861, 120; see also, *Spirit of the Times*, March 27, 1858, 78; *American Chronicle*, Jan 2, 1868, 4.

99. *Clipper*, Nov. 15, 1856, 236.

100. *Ibid.*, April 3, 1858, 395; Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics," 657.

101. *Clipper*, April 23, 1859, 4.

102. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1857, 42.

103. *New England Base Ballist*, Aug. 6, 1868, 2.

on the other it argued ball players would do more work. When “a young man steals a few hours a week from the desk of an unventilated counting house,” he was not wasting time. He was building strength so he could work harder. “To the businessman we would say . . . that better work and more of it is to be got out of employees who are allowed to recuperate their physical powers by recreation than the most slave worked laborer can yield.”¹⁰⁴ The song, “Catch It on the Fly,” published in Chicago in 1867 summed up the health benefits of baseball for the worker:

Come jolly comrade, here’s the game
That’s played in open air,
Where clerks and all the indoor men
Can profit by a share;
‘Twill make the weak man strong again,
‘Twill brighten ev’ry eye,
And all that need such exercise
Should catch it on the ‘Fly.’¹⁰⁵

Those who promoted baseball did not, as modern critics claim, do so on the grounds that the game socialized workers into the business system. Because business workers were the game’s natural constituency, appeals for support were couched in market terms. But the arguments were based on the assumption that sports recreation was compensatory—that it made up for something lacking in office and shop. Employees would return to work healthy and refreshed they said. The players and their friends viewed the game as relief, not reinforcement. There is no historical evidence to support the view that baseball was intended as a device for worker control. On the contrary, employer reaction in the 1850s and 1860s was mixed at best, and it would be thirty years before the game was institutionalized and fifty before the usefulness of sports as a mold of values would be widely recognized.

Prior to about 1880 support for baseball had stressed the indirect economic benefits of good health and compensatory recreation for business workers who played. It was a rare and sophisticated observer in the pre-professional period who recognized that baseball was more than exercise and a change of pace. Ralph Waldo Emerson for example, had praised the educational value of baseball and cricket in 1877 because they taught honesty, pragmatism and appreciation of earned merit.¹⁰⁶ But only pioneer sports writer Henry Chadwick had a sense of the congruence between ball games and business from the earliest days. In fact, Chadwick used both the carrot and the stick. First he threatened employers that the worker who was pressed to the grindstone would do his tasks grudgingly and “revenge himself—at his own sad cost to be sure, but equally at the ultimate cost of his employer—by plunging

104. *Ball Players’ Chronicle*, June 27, 1867, 4.

105. Paul M. Angle, “Take me Out to the Ball Game,” *Chicago History* 7 (Summer, 1964), 100.

106. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Lectured and Biographical Sketches*, Emerson’s Complete Works, Riverside Edition, vol. 10 (Boston Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1886), 138; for dating see, Robert E. Spiller and Wallace E. Williams, eds., *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 3, 1838-1842 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972), 286.

into dissipations at night, ten times worse than the worst of those incident to base ball association.”¹⁰⁷ But then he promised them that playing ball demanded obedience, and taught “a love of order, discipline and fair play.”¹⁰⁸

With the 1880's a change took place in the attitude of businessmen toward baseball. An unprecedented display of employer support and encouragement of amateur baseball during that decade appears to reflect a more sophisticated appreciation of the game as a device to reinforce business values. By the turn of the century an open alliance between business and baseball was clearly emerging. This new alliance came about in part from a growing conscious recognition of the congruence between baseball and business. “A few years ago a certain shortsighted class of American employers engaged in quite a crusade against the national game of baseball on the absurd plea that the game prevented their employees from attending to their business,” wrote the *Metropolitan* in 1882. “The fallacy of this opinion was soon made plain to them,” continued the paper, “and since then they have changed their idea on the subject and now commercial nines, encouraged by sensible employers, form the majority of the amateur class of the metropolitan baseball fraternity.”¹⁰⁹ Athletics “demand of the contestants the ability to work with others, power of combination, readiness to subordinate selfish impulses, personal desires, and even individual credit to a common end,” explained the president of M.I.T. in 1893.¹¹⁰ By the beginning of World War I employer attitudes toward baseball had undergone an almost complete transformation. While at first sports were not a major component of Progressive Era business welfare programs, by the end of the era industrial sports in general and baseball in particular, had become widely accepted.

The players on nineteenth century amateur teams frequently came from the same occupation or the same firm. They were men who arrived on the diamond with shared experiences, and the game became a continuation of their collectivity. Starting in the 1850s and increasing slowly through the 1880s, sporting papers carried stories and scores of teams composed of men from the same occupation or of men who worked in the same firm. Beginning with the Albany State House clerks playing the City Bank clerks in 1857, the *Clipper* listed dozens of similar teams over the next twenty-five years.¹¹¹ Printers and typesetters seem to have been particularly inclined toward forming teams (or understandably more successful at getting their names in the paper). At least fifteen such clubs can be identified by their names, representing such major publications as *Harper's*, *Frank Leslie's* and the *New York Times*.¹¹² Also included were teams from theatres, retail stores, express companies, government agencies, railroads, banks, insurance companies, and a variety of manu-

107. *American Chronicle*, Feb. 27, 1858, 68.

108. Adelman, “The Development of Modern Athletics,” 681; see also, *Clipper*, May 24, 1856, 36.

109. *Metropolitan*, Aug. 12, 1882, 1.

110. Christian Karl Messenger, “Sport in American Literature (1830-1930)” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1974), 48.

111. *Clipper*, June 6, 1857, 54.

112. *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1865, 228; *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1862, 227.

facturing firms.¹¹³ Evidence indicates that the phenomenon was not limited to New York, but occurred across the country. “The town, like most American factory towns, was baseball-mad,” explained an industrial ball player in Phillips Curtiss’ novel *The Ladder*. “Not only was there a team for the town itself, but for every factory and most of the departments within the factory. . . .”¹¹⁴

The emergence of professionalism in the 1870s concentrated public attention on the new leagues at the expense of the amateur game. Some business ball players reacted to their declining status by attempting to form commercial leagues. In 1875 the Cotton Exchange Base Ball Club of New York observed that since it was “an established custom for the different business houses, banks, trades, insurance companies, exchanges, etc. to test their skill and proficiency in our national game,” an organization of such teams should be formed.¹¹⁵ There is no evidence that any such league was established, but several years later “young men connected with mercantile and manufacturing establishments in Chicago” did create an amateur association.¹¹⁶

Despite the growth of professional ball during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the amateur game thrived. In 1881 sporting journalist Henry Chadwick wrote to the *New York Times* to complain that there were not enough fields in the city to accommodate the “thousands of clerks of our banking houses, insurance offices, business exchanges and mercantile houses” who want to play.¹¹⁷ A second, and again apparently unsuccessful attempt to form a “commercial base ball association” in New York was made in 1882, and finally in 1883 both Boston and New York teams created governing organizations.¹¹⁸ Baltimore followed with a similar association in 1884.¹¹⁹

There were two reasons for the rise of amateur commercial leagues. First, the new leagues legitimized and re-institutionalized amateur baseball that had been left in the dark after the rise of professionalism. “Muscle is made and health is gained in the unpretentious little organizations whose names are never in the papers,” said *Harper’s* in 1884. The article explained that it was “natural” for workers to be athletes which was why there were clubs “in most of the large mercantile and manufacturing establishments.”¹²⁰

Second, the commercial amateurs were experiencing the same abuses that had led to the demise of the amateur associations in the 1870’s and to the rise of professional teams. Many of the pioneer ball clubs had begun their viola-

113. *Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1860, 186; *ibid.*, Oct. 7, 1865, 203; *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1866, 138; *Ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1865, 274; *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1869, 203; *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1867; 181; *Ibid.*, May 20, 1882, 139; *Ibid.*, Sept 28, 1867, 169; *Ibid.*, July 31, 1869, 131.

114. Curtiss, *The Ladder*, 30; see also, Anthony B. Lampe, “The Background of Professional Baseball in St. Louis,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 7 (October, 1950), 25; Federal Writers’ Project, *Baseball in Old Chicago* (Chicago A. C. McLung & Co., 1939), 8; and into Canada as well, Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, 53-54.

115. *Clipper*, May 1, 1857, 37.

116. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1877, 346.

117. Chadwick, “Chadwick Scrap Book,” letter to the *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1881; see also, *Clipper*, April 8, 1882, 44.

118. *Metropolitan*, Nov. 25, 1882, 2.

119. *Clipper*, March 22, 1884, 2.

120. H. C. Brunner, “City Athletics,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 68 (Jan., 1884), 298.

tions of the amateur code by finding good players jobs that were high in pay and low in hours. Both Al Spalding and Cap Anson were early recipients of this form of disguised compensation.¹²¹ From there it was just a matter of time before the pretense was dropped and men openly received pay for playing baseball.

Professionalism eliminated sub rosa payments to the best players but the problem re-emerged among second level athletes who played for the commercial teams. With so many men from so many companies competing, employers began to equate team success with company prestige. When he sought work in an insurance company in the 1890s, Curtiss' fictional hero Frank Connor was told there were 804 applicants ahead of him. But the downcast job seeker bumped into an old friend as he was leaving the building, and his friend spoke briefly with the employment manager who came out of his office to offer Connor a position. "But for Pete's sake," Connor asked his friend Reddy, "what did you tell him about me?"

I told him, replied Reddy, grinning, "that you were the best second-base-man in the state."¹²²

"Baseball, it must not be forgotten, was the real reason for which the huge and magnificent Brookfield Insurance Company had decided to pay me twelve dollars a week for stamping the little round clock on the back of its correspondence," Connor explained. The previous year Brookfield Insurance had lost the championship to a rival firm, the Universal Fire and Accident Company. Connor admitted he could not understand what difference regaining the pennant "would make to the policy holders in Maine and Wisconsin," but he happily accepted the short working hours and the adulation of his co-workers who gained more joy from regaining the championship than they would have from writing "a policy on the whole British Empire."¹²³

Not only did the firms begin to hire semi-professional "ringers" to play on company teams, but entire teams of "revolvers" moved en masse from firm to firm working and playing for the company that would give them the highest paying jobs. The situation had become so bad by 1883 that the *Clipper* complained, "legitimate amateur nines of commercial houses have been virtually driven out of the arena."¹²⁴ To remedy this abuse, both the Boston and the New York Commercial Associations included a rule that all company team players had to have been employed for at least one month prior to the opening of the baseball season.¹²⁵ The spirit of commercial baseball in the 1880s is neatly summed up in a letter to the *Clipper* from the auditor of the Union Pacific Railway Company. The railroad team needed a catcher and asked the

121. Adrian C. Anson, *A Ball Player's Career* (Chicago: Era Publishing Co., 1900), 29; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 119; also see, David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball: From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 18; Jeffrey L. Haven, "Baseball: The Origins and Development of the Game to 1903" (Ed.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1979), 52; Buker, "Cradle of Baseball," n.p. [eleventh article].

122. Curtiss, *The Ladder*, 92-93.

123. *Ibid.*, 110-111.

124. *Clipper*, April 7, 1883, 37.

125. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1883, 7; *Ibid.*, April 14, 1883, 51.

paper to help recruit one. The company assured the paper that “all our players are men who are competent to do clerical work and are paid as clerks and not as ball catchers.”¹²⁶ When a company would actually boast it had turned down ball players because they were incompetent workers, amateur baseball had obviously come of age.¹²⁷

The tradition of business workers playing amateur baseball clearly pre-dates the beginnings of formal company sponsorship of teams around 1880. The company teams of the Eighties and Nineties however mark a change in business attitudes. Baseball had ceased to be a “problem” and had become a source of company pride. But the evidence indicates that pride was frequently focused on an official company team that represented the firm in commercial leagues. Those workers who were not good enough to make the company “varsity” still had to play pick-up ball with little if any company support. Such seems to have been the case at Pullman where, starting in 1881, the extensive company recreation program provided athletic facilities for all workers but focused on official company teams.¹²⁸ E. P. Allis and Company (Allis-Chalmers) and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company appear to have been the first companies to sponsor multiple ball clubs in the 1890s, and it was not until after the turn of the century that participant baseball was widely embraced as part of industrial recreation.¹²⁹ Indeed, by 1915 Ida Tarbell claimed that “the factory athletic field is coming to be almost as much a matter of course as the sanitary drinking fountains.”¹³⁰ Several surveys of company welfare and recreation programs in the pre-World War I period indicate baseball was the most popular sport among business workers and that participants included everyone from managers to janitors.¹³¹

The reversal of business attitudes toward employee sports from indifference and opposition to acceptance and even support, was consistent with a wide ranging change in industrial relations away from confrontation and toward a policy of welfare capitalism. It seems clear that the welfare work of Progressive Era businesses was motivated as much by an attempt to undermine union-

126. *Ibid.*, April 5, 1884, 35.

127. See also Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 178; Margaret F. Byington, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (New York: Charities Publications Committee, 1910 [Arno Press reprint, 1969]), 116; George T. Wiley, “Baseball and the Coal Mining Community—The 1930’s,” *Proceedings of the North American Society for Sport History* (1978), 38.

128. Wilma J. Pesavento, “Sport and Recreation in the Pullman Experiment, 1880-1890,” *Journal of Sport History* 9 (Summer, 1982), 38-60; see also, John R. Schleppe, “‘It Pays’: John H. Patterson and Industrial Recreation at the National Cash Register Company,” *Journal of Sport History* 6 (Winter, 1974), 24; Stuart Brands, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970), 78-82.

129. Jackson M. Andreson, *Industrial Recreation: A Guide to its Organization and Administration* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1955), 43-45; Edwin L. Shuey, *Factory People and Their Employers: How Their Relation Made Pleasant and Profitable* (New York: Lenthilhon & Company, 1900), 56.

130. Ida M., Tarbell, “The Golden Rule in Business, part 10, A Fine Place to Work,” *American Magazine* 80 (Sept., 1915), 39.

131. A.H. Wyman, “Recreation in Industrial Communities,” *American Physical Education Review* 24 (Dec., 1919), 473-480; William H. Tolman, *Social Engineering* (New York: McGraw Publishing Co. 1909), 298-323; Lebert H. Weir, *Vacational Recreation in Indiana, 1916* ([Bloomington, Indiana], The Extension Division of Indiana University, 1917), 109; see also, Lee K. Frankel and Alexander Fleischer, *The Human Factor in Industry* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), 253-255; William Ingles, *George F. Johnson and His Industrial Democracy* (New York: Huntington Press, 1915), 1252-263.

ism and nascent socialism as by a quickening of human kindness in the hearts of employers. And, as businessmen sought to create a more humane work atmosphere recreation programs took on an increasing importance.¹³²

Some of the same elements of baseball that had appealed to the game's Gilded Age supporters were also emphasized by its new Progressive Era business promoters. The argument that baseball would provide a wholesome alternative to drinking, gambling and morally dangerous commercialized entertainment like dance halls and amusement parks continued, as did the emphasis on the health benefits of outdoor exercise.¹³³ But the most widely cited reason for business support of team sports explicitly recognized the congruent nature of the game. In 1916 Lebert H. Weier, the Field Secretary of the Playground and Recreation Association of America observed that "the habits of cooperation found in the leisure time activities of industrial and commercial establishments help to develop the quality of mind and the spirit of cooperation needed in the organization and conduct of business itself."¹³⁴ Or, in the words of a Carnegie Steel spokesman, sports developed "efficiency and the spirit to pull together . . . essential factors in the success of our industry."¹³⁵ Once this fundamental structural similarity between sports and business was recognized, most remaining opposition folded and organized promotion of various kinds of sports and play became one of a series of techniques used by ideologically conservative reformers to ameliorate worker discontent and stave off organized opposition to capitalism.¹³⁶

Baseball, as an organized adult game, had originated among urban business workers in the 1840s and 1850s. As its popularity grew, spread in large part by the rise of professionalism in the 1870s, public attention shifted to the big leagues. But amateur participant baseball continued to thrive among the very kinds of people who had created it in the first place. Ignored by the press and public, amateur baseball survived the Gilded Age to finally become recognized and accepted as part of the business welfare movement in the Progressive Era. Its institutionalization in the 1900's reflected a belated recognition of the reasons for the game's continuing popularity. The structure of the game

132. David Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 101-121; James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 18-19.

133. Weir, *Vocational Recreation*, 15; Robert Goldman and John Wilson, "The Rationalization of Leisure," *Politics and Society* 7 (1977), 163; Bradley Rudin, "Industrial Betterment and Scientific Management as Social Control, 1890-1920," *Berkeley Journal of Society* 17 (1972-1973), 60; Tarbell, "The Golden Rule in Business," 39; Wyman, "Recreation in Industrial Communities," 480.

134. Weir, *Vocational Recreation*, 15.

135. Leonard J Diehl and Floyd R. Eastwood, *Industrial Recreation: Its Development and Present Status* (Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University, 1940), 8-9, 54-56.

136. Wyman, "Recreation in Industrial Communities," 480; Tolman, *Social Engineering*, 313; for an excellent discussion of this phenomenon see Goldman and Wilson, "The Rationalization of Leisure,"; also Rudin, "Industrial Betterment,"; Timothy Patrick O'Hanlon, "Interscholastic Athletics, 1900-1940: Shaping Citizens for Unequal Roles in the Modern Industrial State" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979), 42-54; Dom Cavallo, "Social Reform and the Movement to Organize Children's Play During the Progressive Era," *History of Childhood Quarterly (Journal of Psychohistory)* 3 (1976), 509-522; Goodman, *Choosing Sides*, 130-145; Michael P. McCarthy, "Politics and the Parks: Chicago Businessmen and the Recreation Movement," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 65 (1972), 166; Ingham, "American Sport in Transition", 245-260.

demanded behavior and attitudes fundamentally similar to those required by modern business. That congruence meant the game was neither a threat nor irrelevant, it was instead an ally in the constant battle to maintain a satisfied and productive work force.